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COLLECTED POEMS

By the same Author

THE BLACK PRINCE
GASTON DE FOIX
MAHASENA
PROSERPINE
DESIDERIO
COLLECTED POEMS
POEMS—1914-1919
TRANSLATIONS ANCIENT AND MODERN
WITH THE RUSSIANS IN MANCHURIA
A YEAR IN RUSSIA
THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE
LANDMARKS IN RUSSIAN LITERATURE
AN OUTLINE OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE
RUSSIAN ESSAYS AND STUDIES
THE GLASS MENDER
FORGET-ME-NOT AND LILY OF THE VALLEY
ORPHEUS IN MAYFAIR
DEAD LETTERS
DIMINUTIVE DRAMAS
LOST DIARIES
ROUND THE WORLD IN ANY NUMBER OF DAYS
THE GREY STOCKING, AND OTHER PLAYS
PASSING BY
R.F.C. H.Q.
OVERLOOKED
THE PUPPET SHOW OF MEMORY
H.M. EMBASSY, AND OTHER PLAYS
A TRIANGLE
C
HILDESHEIM
PUNCH AND JUDY, AND OTHER ESSAYS
HALF A MINUTE'S SILENCE
TRANSLATIONS ANCIENT AND MODERN (WITH
ORIGINALS)

COLLECTED POEMS

BY

MAURICE BARING



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COLLECTED POEMS

IN MEMORIAM, A. H.

*(Auberon Herbert, Captain Lord Lucas, R.F.C. ;
killed, 3rd November 1916)*

Νωμᾶται δ' ἐν ἀπρυγέτῳ χάει

THE wind had blown away the rain
That all day long had soaked the level plain.
Against the horizon's fiery wrack,
The sheds loomed black.
And higher, in their tumultuous concourse met,
The streaming clouds, shot-riddled banners, wet
With the flickering storm,
Drifted and smouldered, warm
With flashes sent
From the lower firmament.
And they concealed—
They only here and there through rifts revealed
A hidden sanctuary of fire and light,
A city of chrysolite.

We looked and laughed and wondered, and I said :
That orange sea, those oriflammes outspread
Were like the fanciful imaginings
That the young painter flings
Upon the canvas bold,
Such as the sage and the old

Make mock at, saying it could never be ;
And you assented also, laughingly.
I wondered what they meant,
That flaming firmament,
Those clouds so grey so gold, so wet so warm,
So much of glory and so much of storm,
The end of the world, or the end
Of the war—remoter still to me and you, my friend.

Alas ! it meant not this, it meant not that :
It meant that now the last time you and I
Should look at the golden sky,
And the dark fields large and flat,
And smell the evening weather,
And laugh and talk and wonder both together.

The last, last time. We nevermore should meet
In France or London street,
Or fields of home. The desolated space
Of life shall nevermore
Be what it was before.
No one shall take your place.
No other face
Can fill that empty frame.
There is no answer when we call your name.
We cannot hear your shout upon the stair.
We turn to speak and find a vacant chair.
Something is broken which we cannot mend.
God has done more than take away a friend
In taking you ; for all that we have left
Is bruised and irremediably bereft.
There is none like you. Yet not that alone
Do we bemoan ;

But this : that you were greater than the rest,
And better than the best.

O liberal heart fast-rooted to the soil,
O lover of ancient freedom and proud toil,
Friend of the gipsies and all wandering song,
The forest's nursling and the favoured child
Of woodlands wild—
O brother to the birds and all things free,
Captain of liberty !
Deep in your heart the restless seed was sown ;
The vagrant spirit fretted in your feet ;
We wondered could you tarry long,
And brook for long the cramping street,
Or would you one day sail for shores unknown,
And shake from you the dust of towns, and spurn
The crowded market-place—and not return ?
You found a sterner guide ;
You heard the guns. Then, to their distant fire,
Your dreams were laid aside ;
And on that day, you cast your heart's desire
Upon a burning pyre ;
You gave your service to the exalted need,
Until at last from bondage freed,
At liberty to serve as you loved best,
You chose the noblest way. God did the rest.

So when the spring of the world shall shrive our stain,
After the winter of war,
When the poor world awakes to peace once more,
After such night of ravage and of rain,
You shall not come again.
You shall not come to taste the old Spring weather,
To gallop through the soft, untrampled heather,

To bathe and bake your body on the grass.
We shall be there, alas !
But not with you. When Spring shall wake the earth,
And quicken the scarred fields to the new birth,
Our grief shall grow. For what can Spring renew
More fiercely for us than the need of you ?

That night I dreamt they sent for me and said
That you were missing. " Missing, missing—dead " :
I cried when in the morning I awoke,
And all the world seemed shrouded in a cloak ;
But when I saw the sun,
And knew another day had just begun,
I brushed the dream away, and quite forgot
The nightmare's ugly blot.
So was the dream forgot. The dream came true.
Before the night I knew
That you had flown away into the air
For ever. Then I cheated my despair.
I said
That you were safe—or wounded—but not dead.
Alas ! I knew
Which was the false and true.

And after days of watching, days of lead,
There came the certain news that you were dead.
You had died fighting, fighting against odds,
Such as in war the gods
Æthereal dared when all the world was young ;
Such fighting as blind Homer never sung,
Nor Hector nor Achilles never knew ;
High in the empty blue.

High, high, above the clouds, against the setting sun,
The fight was fought, and your great task was done.

Of all your brave adventures this the last
The bravest was and best ;
Meet ending to a long embattled past,
This swift, triumphant, fatal quest,
Crowned with the wreath that never perisheth,
And diadem of honourable death ;
Swift Death aflame with offering supreme,
And mighty sacrifice,
More than all mortal dream ;
A soaring death, and near to Heaven's gate ;
Beneath the very walls of Paradise.
Surely with soul elate,
You heard the destined bullet as you flew,
And surely your prophetic spirit knew
That you had well deserved that shining fate.

Here is no waste,
No burning Might-have-been,
No bitter aftertaste,
None to censure, none to screen,
Nothing awry, nor anything misspent ;
Only content, content beyond content,
Which hath not any room for betterment.

God, who had made you valiant, strong and swift,
And maimed you with a bullet long ago,
And cleft your riotous ardour with a rift,
And checked your youth's tumultuous overflow,
Gave back your youth to you,
And packed in moments rare and few
Achievements manifold
And happiness untold,
And bade you spring to Death as to a bride,
In manhood's ripeness, power and pride,

And on your sandals the strong wings of youth.
He let you leave a name
To shine on the entablatures of truth,
For ever :
To sound for ever in answering halls of fame.

For you soared onwards to that world which rags
Of clouds, like tattered flags,
Concealed ; you reached the walls of chrysolite,
The mansions white ;
And losing all, you gained the civic crown
Of that eternal town,
Wherein you passed a rightful citizen
Of the bright commonwealth ablaze beyond our ken.

Surely you found companions meet for you
In that high place ;
You met there face to face
Those you had never known, but whom you knew ;
Knights of the Table Round,
And all the very brave, the very true,
With chivalry crowned ;
The captains rare,
Courteous and brave beyond our human air ;
Those who had loved and suffered overmuch,
Now free from the world's touch.
And with them were the friends of yesterday,
Who went before and pointed you the way ;
And in that place of freshness, light and rest,
Where Lancelot and Tristram vigil keep
Over their King's long sleep,
Surely they made a place for you,
Their long-expected guest,
Among the chosen few,

And welcomed you, their brother and their friend,
To that companionship which hath no end.

And in the portals of the sacred hall
You hear the trumpet's call,
At dawn upon the silvery battlement,
Re-echo through the deep
And bid the sons of God to rise from sleep
And with a shout to hail
The sunrise on the city of the Grail :
The music that proud Lucifer in Hell
Missed more than all the joys that he forwent.
You hear the solemn bell
At vespers, when the oriflammes are furled ;
And then you know that somewhere in the world,
That shines far-off beneath you like a gem,
They think of you, and when you think of them
You know that they will wipe away their tears,
And cast aside their fears ;
That they will have it so,
And in no otherwise ;
That it is well with them because they know,
With faithful eyes,
Fixed forward and turned upwards to the skies,
That it is well with you,
Among the chosen few,
Among the very brave, the very true.

DIFFUGERE NIVES, 1917

To J. C. S.

THE snows have fled, the hail, the lashing rain,
Before the Spring.

The grass is starred with buttercups again,
The blackbirds sing.

Now spreads the month that feast of lovely things
We loved of old.

Once more the swallow glides with darkling wings
Against the gold.

Now the brown bees about the peach-trees boom
Upon the walls ;
And far away beyond the orchard's bloom
The cuckoo calls.

The season holds a festival of light ;—
For you, for me,
The shadows are abroad, there falls a blight
On each green tree.

And every leaf unfolding, every flower
Brings bitter meed ;
Beauty of the morning and the evening hour
Quickens our need.

All is reborn, but never any Spring
Can bring back this ;
Nor any fullness of midsummer bring
The voice we miss.

The smiling eyes shall smile on us no more ;
 The laughter clear,
Too far away on the forbidden shore,
 We shall not hear.

Bereft of these until the day we die,
 We both must dwell ;
Alone, alone, and haunted by a cry :
 “ Hail and farewell ! ”

Yet when the scythe of Death shall near us hiss,
 Through the cold air,
Then on the shuddering marge of the abyss,
 They will be there.

They will be there to lift us from sheer space
 And empty night ;
And we shall turn and see them face to face
 In the new light.

So shall we pay the unabated price
 Of their release ;
And found on our consenting sacrifice
 Their lasting peace.

The hopes that fall like leaves before the wind,
 The baffling waste,
And every earthly joy that leaves behind
 A mortal taste.

The uncompleted end of all things dear,
 The clanging door
Of Death, for ever loud with the last fear.
 Haunt them no more.

The uncompleted end of all employ,
The wasted store,
The aftertaste of every mortal joy
Vex them no more.

No more they crave in vain of heedless Fate,
A last farewell ;
No more for them the words : " No more," " Too late,"
Repeat their knell.

Without them the awakening world is dark
With dust and mire ;
Yet as they went they flung to us a spark,
A thread of fire

To guide us, while beneath the sombre skies
Faltering we tread,
Until for us like morning stars shall rise
The deathless dead.

JULIAN GRENFELL

BECAUSE of you we will be glad and gay,
Remembering you, we will be brave and strong ;
And hail the advent of each dangerous day,
And meet the last adventure with a song.

And, as you proudly gave your jewelled gift,
We'll give our lesser offering with a smile,
Nor falter on that path where, all too swift,
You led the way and leapt the golden stile.

Whether new paths, new heights to climb, you find,
Or gallop through the unfooted asphodel,
We know you know we shall not lag behind,

Nor halt to waste a moment on a fear ;
And you will speed us onward with a cheer,
And wave beyond the stars that all is well.

PIERRE

I SAW you starting for another war,
The emblem of adventure and of youth,
So that men trembled, saying : " He forsooth
Has gone, has gone ; he shall return no more."

And then out there, they told me you were dead,
Taken and killed ; how was it that I knew,
Whatever else was true, that was not true ?
And then I saw you pale upon your bed,

Scarcely two years ago, when you were sent
Back from the margin of the dim abyss ;
For Death had sealed you with a warning kiss,

And let you go to meet a nobler fate :
To serve in fellowship, O fortunate :
To die in battle with your regiment.

ICARUS

(Translated from the French of Philippe Desportes)

HERE fell the daring Icarus in his prime,
He who was brave enough to scale the skies ;
And here bereft of plume his body lies,
Leaving the valiant envious of that climb.

O rare performance of a soul sublime,
That with small loss such great advantage buys !
Happy mishap ! fraught with so rich a prize,
That bids the vanquished triumph over time.

So new a path his youth did not dismay,
His wings but not his noble heart said nay ;
He had the glorious sun for funeral fire ;

He died upon a high adventure bent ;
The sea his grave, his goal the firmament,
Great is the tomb, but greater the desire.

EPITAPH

HERE murdered by the frenzied, not the free,
Lies the last monarch of a star-crossed line ;
Anointed Emperor by right divine,
From Arctic icefields to the Aral Sea,

From Warsaw to the walls of Tartary.
His country's travail claimed a high design ;
Too stubborn to respond, he shrank supine
Before the large demand of destiny.

Bereft of crown, and throne, and hearth, and name,
Grief lent him majesty, and suffering
Gave him a more than regal diadem.

His people kissed the desecrated hem
Of robes not now of splendour but of shame,
And waited for the rising of the King.

AUGUST, 1918

(In a French Village)

I HEAR the tinkling of the cattle bell,
In the broad stillness of the afternoon ;
High in the cloudless haze the harvest moon
Is paler than the phantom of a shell.

A girl is drawing water from a well,
I hear the clatter of her wooden shoon ;
Two mothers to their sleeping babies croon,
And the hot village feels the drowsy spell.

Sleep, child, the Angel of Death his wings has spread ;
His engines scour the land, the sea, the sky ;
And all the weapons of Hell's armoury
Are ready for the blood that is their bread ;
And many a thousand men to-night must die,
So many that they will not count the Dead.

POEMS FROM "C."

1.

VALE

FAREWELL, this is the first, the worst Farewell,
Good-bye to the long dream ;
I hear the tolling of my boyhood's knell,
And I must cross the stream.

Good-bye, South Meadow, Athens, Cuckoo Weir,
Good-bye, tall Brocas trees ;
To me you are more sacred and more fair
Than the Hesperides.

Good-bye, dear Library, dear musty shelves,
Worn books and marble bust,
Where over tables scholars skipped like elves,
And raised a cloud of dust.

But there I saw—as through a misty veil,
A chalice of white fire—
The light of Shelley's song, and heard the tale
Of his divine desire.

'Twas there I read how, led by fatal chance,
A mortal loved the Moon ;
And thus I learnt the language of romance,
And heard the magic tune.

The little book was like a silver key
To many-coloured lands,
Where wondrous harps upon a ghostly sea
Answer a mermaid's hands.

To-morrow I shall be beyond the spell,
The fields behind ; the road
Before me ; banished from the wishing-well,
And on my back a load.

Yet none can steal the tasted happiness,
And if I meet dark hours,
Dear Mother, I will turn in my distress
Back to thy chiming towers.

Though pangs begotten of sweet memory
Make worse the present woe,
I'll turn to thee and say : " At Eton I
Was happy long ago."

" What can I give thee, Mother, in return
For all thy gifts to me ?
What if no laurel shall adorn my urn,
Nor deed of high degree ?

" Others with honour, glory and green bays
Shall brighten thy bright fame ;
I, with no more than love, can swell thy praise
With one forgotten name."

2.

I. M. H.

THIS is the house we used to know so well ;
 This the front door,
And locked. I had no need to ring this bell :—
 Never before.

Where is the sundial with its sphere of gold ?
 The vane's bright comb ?
All gone ! but from the bank the soft black mould
 Still whispers : " Home."

Those paths, once cared for, are now choked with grass ;
 They've stripped the tower
Of ivy, and exchanged for costly glass
 Our trellised bower.

The old we knew is crumbling in decay ;
 The new gives pain ;
The soul of home has fled too far away
 To come again.

The door is open : what is this strange face ?
 " I'll show you round."—
" I think I know the way." Ah ! here's the place ;
 " Tom Tiddler's ground."

I walk through empty rooms ; she tells her tale :
 " They used to smoke
Here, after dinner. Here, before the sale,
 The walls were oak."

Upstairs. "Sir, mind the step,—this used to be
The nursery floor."—
There is but one thing left that speaks to me :
A creaking door.

And here, once more I breathe while shadows fall,
The smell of hay ;
The pictures come to life upon the wall ;
My prayers I say.

But hark ! what wondrous bird is this that sings
So sweet a tune ?
Now I am borne away on elfin wings,
Beyond the moon.

The morning sun is streaming through the blind :—
" They come, they come !
The soldiers ! Hark ! ' The girl I left behind ! '
The fifes ! the drum ! "

Back to the garden . . . here we used to hide . . .
Where is the spot,
The summer-house ? his garden by its side,
My rival plot ?

A forest now of grass with weeds entwined.
Ah, there's the mouse !
Ivy ! I crawl beneath it, and I find
Our summer-house.

And here, with buttercups and watering-can,
We made a brew ;
Beneath that tree we called " Fort Caliban,"
A toadstool grew.

The kitchen-garden. Here's the stagnant tank,
The floating mole ;
The pond with dock leaves and with nettles rank,
The rat's dark hole.

All is the same. But all is not the same :
For he is dead.
The well-known cry : " Hurrah ! I've won the game ! "
The curly head,

The laughing eyes, the angry, stammering speech,
The heart of gold :—
All that is far away beyond our reach,
Beneath the mould.

He lies not here, but far away beyond
His native land ;
Beneath the alien rose, the tropic frond,
The burning sand.

His life was like a February day,
Too warm too soon :
A foretaste of the spring that cannot stay
Beyond the noon.

As swallows, when September poms conceal
A frosty spell,
Fly low about the horses' heads, and wheel,
To say farewell,

So he, at some sure summons in the wind,
Or sky, took wing,
And soared to the gold South. He stayed behind
When came the spring.

They say we'll meet in some transfigured space,
 Beyond the sun.
I need you here, in this familiar place
 Of tears and fun.

I do not need you changed, dissolved in air,
 Nor rarefied ;—
I need you all imperfect as you were,
 Here, at my side.

And yet I cannot think that Death's cold wind
 Has killed the flame
Of you, for ever, and has left behind
 Only a name,

That mortal life is but a derelict ship,
 Without a sail ;
The soul no stronger than a farthing dip
 Matched with a gale.

I ask, I seek, and to the empty air,
 In vain I cry ;
The God they worship, if He hears my prayer,
 Makes no reply.

Lord, give to me the grain of mustard seed,
 That moves the mount :
Give me a drop of water in my need,
 From Thy full fount.

Around me, and above me and beneath,
 Yawns the abyss ;—
Show me the bridge across the gulf of Death,
 To banks of bliss.

Cast the dumb devil from my tomb of grief ;—
Help me to say :
" Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief."
Teach me to pray.

But if the fault be mine, then, Lord, forgive ;
My heart is dry ;
So bitter is the world I cannot live ;—
I dare not die.

3.

A SONG is sighing in the breeze
And in the wind to-night ;
Beyond the hills, across the seas,
It calls to me : " Take flight,
And follow the soft, singing breeze."

Around me in the darkling air
Its echoes call and float :
Sad as a tear, soft as a prayer,
And now a mocking note
Is bidding me Beware.

" Beware and pay no heed to me,"
So sings the mocking tune ;
" Beyond the hills, beyond the sea,
Beneath the phantom moon,
There's worse than Death awaiting thee."

O Song, to peril I am blind,
I'll wander o'er the earth ;
For I shall seek and I shall find
The voice that gave thee birth :
The lips that gave thee to the wind.

ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF JULIET'S OWL

JULIET has lost her little downy owl,
The bird she loved more than all other birds.
He was a darling bird, so white, so wise,
Like a monk hooded in a snowy cowl,
With sun-shy scholar's eyes,
He hooted softly in diminished thirds ;
And when he asked for mice,
He took refusal with a silent pride—
And never pleaded twice.
He was a wondrous bird, as dignified
As any Diplomat
That ever sat
By the round table of a Conference.

He was delicious, lovable and soft.
He understood the meaning of the night,
And read the riddle of the smiling stars.
When he took flight,
And roosted high aloft,
Beyond the shrubbery and the garden fence,
He would return and seek his safer bars,
All of his own accord ; and he would plead
Forgiveness for the trouble and the search,
And for the anxious heart he caused to bleed,
And settle once again upon his perch,
And utter a propitiating note,
And take the heart
Of Juliet by his pretty winning ways.

His was the art
Of pleasing without effort easily.

His fluffy throat,
His sage round eye,
Sad with old knowledge, bright with young amaze,
Where are they now ? ah ! where ?
Perchance in the pale halls of Hecate,
Or in the poplars of Elysium,
He wanders careless and completely free.
But in the regions dumb,
And in the pallid air,
He will not find a sweet, caressing hand
Like Juliet's ; not in all that glimmering land
Shall he behold a silver planet rise
As splendid as the light of Juliet's eyes.
Therefore in weeping with you, Juliet,
Oh ! let us not forget,
To drop with sprigs of rosemary and rue,
A not untimely tear
Upon the bier,
Of him who lost so much in losing you.

LE PRINCE ERRANT

I AM the Prince of unremembered towers
Destroyed before the birth of Babylon ;
And I was there when all the forest shone
While pale Medea culled her deadly flowers.

I heard the iron weeping of the King,
When Orpheus sang to life his buried joy ;
And I beheld upon the walls of Troy
The woman who made of death a little thing.

I heard the horn that shook the mountain tall,
Where Roland lay defeated : and the call
That fevered Tristram whispered to the sea,

And brought Iseult of Cornwall to his side.
I saw the Queen of Egypt like a bride
Go glorious to her dead Mark Antony.

TO H. B.

(With a book of verse)

I too have travelled in the unknown land,
And anchored by the unfrequented shore ;
I too have heard the Stygian waters roar,
And seen the foam of Lethe kiss the sand.

I too have trampled the enchanted grass,
And seen the phantom hunters gallop by,
And heard the faëry bugle, and the sigh
Of banished gods that in the woodways pass.

And as a traveller brings his spoil to him
More richly graced in might and bravery,
So do I give to you these records dim

Of bright adventure in the fields forlorn ;—
To you who heard the blast of Roland's horn,
And saw Iseult set sail for Brittany.

EXILE

THEY with the world would have you reconciled,
Outgrow the impulse of these fantasies,
These rebel storms ; and act in grown-up wise.
They know not ; in your mother's arms you smiled ;

And yet your soul with timeless memories
Was sad ; and when old age shall claim you, child,
Your heart with young despair shall still be wild
And childish mirth shall still light up your eyes.

Because a banished spirit in you dwells,
That strayed from lands beyond the unfurrowed sea,
And frets rejecting its captivity ;

You hear the horns of the forbidden chase,
The happy ghosts that down the woodland race
And gallop through the trampled asphodels.

“Quand vous serez bien vieille”

WHEN you are old, no man will start to hear
That you were once more lovely than the day ;
Old age may change but cannot take away
From you ; and you will meet him without fear.

Yet when you think of him who loved fair things,
And singing of all beauty sang but you,
Nor dreamed you guessed the secret of his strings,
Then say : “ Although he knew it not, I knew.”

I shall be dead and mid the shadowy throng
In the long twilight I shall not forget ;—
You still will tread the earth with royal grace ;

And if you smile remembering my song,
A moonbeam to the kingdoms of regret
Will come and flood with light the sunless place.

WE drifted to each other like two birds,
That meet high in the windy middle air,
Then fly away again ; each unaware
That there had passed between us silent words.

Then like two pilgrims, tired and travel-sore
We sought for shelter from the rising tide
Of night, in the dark hollow mountain-side,
And, mutually remembering, met once more.

But when the morning came and we looked down
Upon the glittering cities of the plain,
We lingered in the lonely crag content ;—

The world which cannot know the hills will frown ;—
But sweet and blissful is the banishment
In the high pinnacles of wind and rain.

You walked into the temple of a soul ;
You scanned the height, the depth, and each recess ;
You praised the silvery sombre loveliness ;
You heard the multitudinous organ roll.

Behind the towering altar, sad and pale,
An angel stood and uttered mournful sighs ;
And, answering the question in your eyes,
The angel pointed to a hanging veil.

You tore aside the veil, a dreadful gleam
Revealed the sights you had not feared to see,
And a great darkness fell upon the shrine.

You wept, but not your pain nor the lost dream
You pitied ; but that this sad thing should be ;—
And then once more the temple shone divine.

TO E. S.

YOUR singing brings the rustle of the trees,
The tall trees sighing on the mountain-side ;
It brings a whisper from the foamless tide
That broadening fills the ample estuaries.

Your singing brings the freshness of the breeze
That comes at twilight to the breathless plain ;
The cry of moaning ghosts that call in vain
From wandering prisons in the winds and seas.

Your singing brings to me the final peace,
Dissolves the torment of perplexity
And guides my spirit to a tranquil home ;—

As when the moon compels the storm to cease
And calms the wind ; and all the skeins of foam
Unravel softly on the vanquished sea.

You were the Queen of evening, and the skies
Were soft above you, knowing you were fair,
The dewy gold of sunset in your hair,
And twilight in the stillness of your eyes.

You did not know your dear divinity,
And childlike, all unconscious that you walked
High in celestial air, you smiled and talked,
And stooped to pluck a rose, and gave it me.

As at the gate of heaven an angel-child
Might wonder at an outcast's pleading gaze,
An outcast kneeling at the golden bars,

And say : " Come, be my playmate, here the days
Are longer, and the ways outside are wild,
And you shall play with suns and silver stars."

ON WATTS' PICTURE OF PAOLO AND FRANCESCA

THOUGH borne like withered leaves upon a stream,
Faded and dead, they would not live again,
Nor, in the hard world, face the wiles of men ;
Their past is but the haunting of a dream.

And yet they would not sleep in asphodel,
Nor, for without remorse is their regret,
Drink deep of bliss and utterly forget ;
Not for all Heaven would they exchange their Hell.

And they give thanks because their punishment
Is sealed and sure, because their doom shall be
To go in anguish through Eternity,

Together on the never-resting air.
Beyond all happiness is their content
Who know there is no end to their despair.

SHALL I pretend that I no more perceive
The peerless worth of your high qualities ?
And say your precious words are honeyed lies
Which my conceit compels me to believe ;

And vow your lips divinely do deceive ;
Call false the unclouded earnest of your eyes
And artificial the pure tears that rise,
When you take pity and with passion grieve ?

Shall I forswear my faith in Truth and Right ?
Acknowledge only God's black cruelty ?
Yet if I bow but to an impious might,

More great and blind my faith in you must be ;
For you are Heaven and Hell and Day and Night,
And Sun and Moon and Providence to me.

*" To that high capital where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay."*

SHELLEY.

THE silver angel with sad sable wings
Flew down to meet her in the dewy field,
And broke her happy song half-way, and sealed
Her singing with the kiss of silent things,

And bade her seek the dark and banished land.
 She did not raise wet, wistful eyes, nor pray
 With outstretched arms for one, for one more day,
 But to his shining hands she gave her hand.

She looked not back, though she remembered much,
 But steadfastly she climbed the darkling stair,
 And followed firm the strange and glistening touch,
 Till in the whiteness of the silent hall,
 Over her frozen eyes and faded hair,
 Queenlike she bound the scarlet coronal.

ΔΕΙΠΙΟΕΣΣΑ ΚΑΛΥΞ

SHE listened to the music of the spheres ;
 We thought she did not hear our happy strings ;
 Stars diademed her hair in misty rings,
 And all too late we knew those stars were tears.

Without she was a temple of pure snow,
 Within were piteous flames of sacrifice ;
 And underneath the dazzling mask of ice
 A heart of swiftest fire was dying slow.

She was a lonely lily. She would fold
 Stiff silver petals over secret gold,
 To shield her passion. She remained afar

From pity. Cast red roses on the pyre !
 She that was snow shall rise to Heaven as fire
 In the still glory of the morning star.

I DREAMED that I was lifted to the skies
And found her in the starless end of space ;
There was no smile of welcome on her face,
There were no tears in her immortal eyes,

She did not recollect nor recognise ;
But comfort, like a dawn, then seemed to break ;
I said, " It is a dream, I shall awake
And find her turning earth to Paradise."

I wake, and know that nothing can restore
My dearest to the Earth, to sight and sound ;
I know that I no longer hope to soar

And find her shining at the heavenly bound.
She is of yesterday for evermore ;
All my to-days are buried in the ground.

AND now the first cold numbness of the blow
Is past, past also is the secret smart ;
The dizzy panic of the helpless heart,
And the rebellious tears have ceased to flow.

Now all the world stands out distinct and sad,
And laughter rings more hollow and more vain ;
Grief seems more palpable, more plenteous pain,
And the mad strife grows hour by hour more mad.

Now I can say : " Thank God she is not here ;
Thank God that yonder, safe upon the shore,
She sleeps beneath the cold and boundless night.

And hears the wailing of the waves no more,
Nor moan of men, in careless fortune's might,
Who cry for help, and as they cry despair."

AFTER SEEING "ROMEO AND JULIET"

A TRAGEDY ? Yes, for the ancient foes,
When fateful friendship sealed their perished feud.
Not tragic for the wooer and the wooed
Was life's untimely, undividing close.

The timorous maid aroused by love arose
A fearless wife. The idler who pursued
His glittering aims, a vain and petty brood,
Through love attained to manhood and repose.

The two transfigured natures blent in one,
And this full, perfect, passionate unity,
For rough and dusty Earth too bright and high,

Sank in great calm, as dreaming unison
Of darkness and midsummer sound must die
Before the daily duty of the Sun.

1892.

O STAR of dawn, descended from the spheres,
From space of gold and snow and flaming zone ;
Princes there were enough among your peers
To live and love and die for you alone.

You were the Goddess of a guarded shrine,
I was the beggar lingering at the gate ;
You left behind the pomp and solemn state,
You sought the Earth discrowned and twice divine.

Now you have laid aside your diadem,
And bound wild roses in your royal hair,
And I may kiss your shining garment's hem.

Truly my soul has scaled the rainbow stair ;
The world lies glistening like a fiery gem,
And all the stars are singing in the air.

SHE is a vessel of mysterious snow,
A water-lily anchored in dark reeds,
That in the evening's violet afterglow
Unfolds its hidden heart of flaming seeds.

She has the halo of the lonely moon,
And round her floats the jessamin's faint musk ;
With summer birds and bees she is in tune,
And silvery moths and the delirious dusk.

In the green twilight of her leafy bower
She gave me water from a whispering well,
And there, a secret sun, she shone for me.

Now I am banished from the ecstasy,
Her face has filled the imperishable hour,
Sways like a phantom moon my soul in Hell.

(From a Play)

I SAW you shepherding a flock of flowers,
Alone in the May morning and the dew.
When dawn discrowned had crowned the east with blue,
To thee the spring surrendered her sweet powers.

A host of viewless angels seemed to tread
Before thee and behind thee ; all the air
Was full of whispering chimes ; and praise and prayer,
Like petals blown, beneath thy feet were spread.

You were unconscious of your empery,
Nor knew that holy rapture round you breathed ;
The heavens their azure smile to you bequeathed,
And you did rob her laughter from the sea.

A benediction from beyond the skies
Streamed from the downward daybreak of your eyes.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

WE have been loosened from the bonds of time
And space in vain divides us. Near or far,
Absent, you shine before me like a star ;
The hours when you are with me cease to chime.

Sadness we know, but not satiety ;
We heed no march of seasons short or long,
O'erwhelmed and deafened by the tides of song,
Which roll increasing from eternity.

For us the glory of the day is done ;
And sunset melts in a long silvery dream
Of darkness luminous with peace and dew ;

We float, like ghosts upon death's endless stream,
In bliss ; for only one soft unison
Breathes in the empty vastness : I and you.

DEMOPHÖON

WE shall not look upon his face again ;
The wanderer will return to us no more.
Brief was the stay ! Yet how could he remain ?
His soul was native to the ghostly shore.

The shadows of dominions huge and dim,
The scent of alien meadows far away,
The breeze that blows from Lethe followed him,
Home-sick for night, and weary of the day.

And found he peace in lands beyond the sun ?
The stillness that he craved, the dreamless home ?
Or stands he now beside the calling foam,

Still waiting till at last the sail shall gleam
And bear him from the place of dusk and dream
To the full harbours of oblivion ?

WE drift apart, nor can we quite forget ;—
Some link is lost ; and that affinity,
That binds us not and will not set us free,
Still tinges all our friendship with regret.

And now I feel our hearts at last have met
In perfect tune ; that God made you for me
And me for you ; and now that He has set
This veil between us, this mute mystery.

Yet when I wash away the dust of earth,
In the cool kingdoms of celestial dew,
I think that you will meet me with a smile,

The old smile made undying with new birth ;
And I'll say this : " I loved you all the while."
And you will say : " I loved you and I knew."

I DARE not pray to thee, for thou art won
Rarely by those by whom thou hast been wooed ;
Thou comest unsolicited, unsued,
Like sudden splendours of the midnight sun.

Yet in my heart the hope shall still abide
That thou hast haply heard my unbreathed prayer ;
That in the stifling moment of despair,
I shall turn round and find thee by my side.

Like a sad pilgrim who has wandered far,
And hopes not any longer for the day,
But blinded by black thickets finds no way,

Comes to a rift of trees in that sad plight,
And suddenly sees the unending aisles of night
And in the emerald gloom the morning star.

ΩΚΥΜΟΡΟΣ

A. G.

GAILY he rode into life's tournament,
Gaily he ran at tilt to win the prize,
April was in his heart and in his eyes,
Death called to him and unafraid he went.

practise secrecy. At Ohlau your face is known, your incognito too. Mr. Warner came to Ohlau once before, and the business on which he came is common knowledge. The motive of your visit now, which I tell you openly is very grateful to me, will surely be suspected.'

Wogan had reason that night to acknowledge the justice of the Prince's argument. He accepted his hospitality, thinking that with time he would persuade him to allow the attempt, and after supper, while making riddles in verse to amuse some of the ladies of the court, one of them, the Countess of Berg, came forward from a corner where she had been busy with pencil and paper, and said, 'It is our turn now. Here, Mr. Warner, is an acrostic which I ask you to solve for me.' And with a smile which held a spice of malice she handed him the paper. Upon it there were ten rhymed couplets. Wogan solved the first four, and found that the initial letters of the words were C, L, E, M. The answer to the acrostic was 'Clementina.' Wogan gave the paper back.

'I can make neither head nor tail of it,' said he. 'The attempt is beyond my powers.'

'Ah,' said she dryly, 'you own as much? I would never have believed you would have owned it.'

'But what is the answer?' asked a voice at which Wogan started.

'The answer,' replied the Countess, 'is Mary, Queen of Scots, who was most unjustly imprisoned in Fotheringay,' and she tore the paper into tiny pieces.

Wogan turned towards the voice which had so startled him and saw the gossamer lady whom he had befriended on the road from Florence. At once he rose and bowed to her.

'I should have presented you before to my friend, Lady

THE DYING RESERVIST

I SHALL not see the faces of my friends,
Nor hear the songs the rested reapers sing
After the labours of the harvesting,
In those dark nights before the summer ends ;

Nor see the floods of spring, the melting snow,
Nor in the autumn twilight hear the stir
Of reedy marshes, when the wild ducks whirl
And circle black against the afterglow.

My mother died ; she shall not have to weep ;
My wife will find another home ; my child,
Too young, will never grieve or know ; but I

Have found my brother, and contentedly
I'll lay my head upon his knees and sleep.
O brother Death,—I knew you when you smiled.

THE WOUNDED

THEY turn us from the long-desired door ;
Here there is shelter for the sorely spent,
But not for us ; since many a dying score
Of maimed and mangled men, whose limbs are rent

With bayonet and with bullet, crowd the floor.
We who have fought since dawn, nor tasted bread,
Although our wounds are slight, our wounds are sore,
We must march on, nor shall we find a bed.

O men, O brothers, is our rest not earned ?
Shall we not seek the mountains huge and wide
Whose doors are always open ? There the guest
Sweet welcome finds ; for thou hast never turned
A stranger from thy gates, nor hast denied,
O hospitable Death, a place to rest.

FUN-CHU-LING,
October 16, 1904.

My love is glad and strong as the salt sea ;
And thou the moon above it, shining bright.
Thou shalt look down upon me thus in might ;
Thus fathomless and wide my love shall be.

And vast and dim with a green world of waves,
And rich with sunken gold and drifting weeds,
And derelict hulls and wrecks of perished deeds,
And the drowned sapphire sunlight of the caves.

But all this huge tumultuous element
Shall whisper like a woodland stream, and sleep
Calm as a slumbering child ; shall smile and weep

In dreams of bliss,—obedient, soft and still ;
For thou, my moon, from thy dark firmament
Upon this sea shalt write thy silver will.

VALE

I AM for ever haunted by one dread,
That I may suddenly be swept away,
Nor have the leave to see you, and to say
Good-bye ; then this is what I would have said :

I have loved summer and the longest day ;
The leaves of June, the slumberous film of heat,
The bees, the swallow, and the waving wheat,
The whistling of the mowers in the hay.

I have loved words which lift the soul with wings,
Words that are windows to eternal things.
I have loved souls that to themselves are true,

Who cannot stoop and know not how to fear,
Yet hold the talisman of pity's tear :
I have loved these because I have loved you.

“ Parce que c'était elle ; parce que c'était moi ”

THAT skies and hills and seas and all things blue
Are bluer for the light which filled your eyes,
That nature's treasure-house of harmonies
Is richer for the music that was you,

Comforts me not ; nor yet the word sublime
That speaks of the unknown immensity,
Where we shall meet and understand, set free
For ever from the bonds of space and time.

You were a summer's day, all warmth and tune ;
Your soul a harbour, dark beneath the moon,
And flashing with soft lights of sympathy ;—

But oh ! the seal of grief more than these things
Is the old phrase that now so sadly rings :
That you were you, and I, alas ! am I.

SPRING FLOODS

You are the first-born crocus of the spring ;
The swiftest swallow from the Afric sands,
That comes back twittering to the northern lands;
The song that larks o'er melted snowfields sing.

You are the million melodies that ring
At dawn, in dew-drenched woods. You are the hour
When the frail almond-blossom breaks in flower,
And you are sweeter than that blossoming.

My life was like a frozen land ; but you
Shone like the sun ; the snows, in disarray,
Made of the plain and meadows one broad stream.

My perished hopes were leafless trees ; to-day,
On the bright floods, by miracle made new,
They float like shadows of a silver dream.

WRITTEN TO A YOUNG LADY

*After seeing her assist at the extinguishing of a fire
in a village in Russia*

I SAW you in the tumult of the fire ;
The flames unfurled a huge triumphant cloud.
You were all white against the shadowy crowd,
Like a calm priestess by a blazing pyre.

hearts were tuned to a sympathy with the Princess in her imprisonment, or touched with the notion of a romantic attachment, smiled upon him their encouragement. The Countess of Berg for once was unobservant, however.

Wogan made his escape from the company as soon as he could, and going up to his apartments read the letter. The moon was at its full, and what with the clear, frosty air, and the snow stretched over the world like a white counterpane, he was able to read the letter by the window, without the light of a candle. It was written in the Chevalier's own cipher and hand; it asked anxiously for news and gave some. Wogan had had occasion before to learn that cipher by heart. He stood by the window and spelled the meaning. Then he turned to go down, but at the door his foot slipped upon the polished boards, and he stumbled on to his knee. He picked himself up, and thinking no more of the matter rejoined the company in the music-room where the Countess of Berg was playing upon a harp.

'The King,' said Wogan, drawing the Prince apart, 'leaves Bologna for Rome.'

'So the letter came from him?' asked the Prince, with an eagerness which could not but seem hopeful to his companion.

'And in his own hand,' replied Wogan.

The Prince shuffled and hesitated as though he was curious to hear particulars. Wogan thought it wise to provoke his curiosity by disregarding it. It seemed that there was wisdom in his reticence, for a little later the Prince took him aside while the Countess of Berg was still playing upon her harp, and said—

'Single-handed you could do nothing. You would need friends.'

THE CONSCRIPT

It were disloyalty, you say, to change
Your roving birthright for a paper rose,
And for a silver penny and brave clothes
To swear away your spirit's reckless range.

You will not sell your freedom for a plume,
Nor let your soul be brutalised in drill,
Nor break you to a meddling sergeant's will ;
You that have access to the general's room.

I claim a larger freedom. If in line
I serve with others, all their strength is mine.
The large consent uplifts me upon wings.

And in the faces of the men that die,
Obedient to the bugle, I descry
The seal and mandate of the King of Kings.

DIRGE FOR A POET

I PONDER on a broken lute,
The fragment of a song,
And wonder if the soul be mute,
Or if a heavenly throng
Of harmonies and mighty themes
Proclaim his interrupted dreams.

Dirge for a Poet

The wistful thought, the hidden fire,
The darkling prophecies,
The passion and the brave desire
That lit his startled eyes ;
Oh ! will that broken music reach
Through large fulfilment unto speech ?

And shall I meet him once again
Upon the endless way ?
East of the sun, where gleams the plain
That knows not night nor day ;
And in the calm untroubled land
Will his wild spirit understand ?

Like some soft fiery cloud that soars
At sunset o'er the snow,
He sought the pale unearthly shores
Beyond the western glow ;
And sank into the wave of night
Before he reached the crimson light.

Perchance to-morrow's western wind
May bear to oceans dim,
Mysterious clouds incarnadined,
But never one like him.
Shall nature stop the march of spheres
Because of a few foolish tears ?

Once only nature breathes each note
That builds the song of time :
No more across the skies will float
That tender sunset chime
I loved ; and in the eastern skies
A million morning stars arise.

CIRCE

No more shall the immortal gods be seen ;
Weary of exile in the sullen world,
Forgotten by the thankless mortal race ;
They recollect the glory that has been ;
Olympus once with starry snow impearled
Haunts and derides them in their chill disgrace,
And thus they seek the dark and dreamless place.

Some linger yet, and in the Tuscan hills,
Where the pink rose-bush fringes the green corn,
The swallows hear the song of Proserpine ;
And oft Apollo with a glory fills
A church on some Sicilian shore, forlorn,
Where none but lovers seek the ruined shrine ;
But lovers know and praise the light divine.

Circe abides in her enchanted home,
The rainbow circle of an opal isle,
Set in a ghostly sea where no wind blows ;
Yet few can find that reef of calling foam.
And oft when through the night, a weary while,
Pilgrims have laboured, as the morning glows,
It blossoms in the East, a pearly rose.

Yet Circe too is changed, a listless shade
Of her who paced before the golden loom ;
For she has felt the waving of Death's wings,
A pale immortal flower, she fain would fade ;
Her life is dusk that deepens not to gloom ;
Dumbly she feels the sharp regret that stings
The darkened soul, the lapse of mortal things.

Hushed is the music of the haunted well,
Unvexed by sighing ghosts her woodland ways ;
For Circe has renounced her perilous wand ;
Nor seeks to capture men with any spell.
They do but drink the pity of her gaze,
They feel the solace of her flower-like hand,
And dwell a moment in her still strange land.

There in the emerald evening she bestows
A silent pitying audience on her slaves ;
And thence they sail into a wide despair ;
Around her isle dark vapours seem to close,
Before them lie unending wastes of waves,
And dazed they think the vision blest and fair
Was but a mirage of the mocking air.

Henceforth as men that dream a lustrous dream
Which lingers through the brightness of the day
And clings like subtle scent of herb or flower,
They cannot but recall the halcyon gleam
Of that green island in the world grown grey ;
They see the pale witch in her dusky bower,
Like a tall lily in the twilight hour.

And some set sail and seek her isle once more
Toiling until they sink into their grave ;
But no man twice fulfils the phantom quest.
And some await upon the desolate shore
A pilot star to point across the wave,
The sunset isle they find not in the West,
Till Death upon their tir'd eyes sheddeth rest.

But Circe watches from her jasmine throne,
And when at sunset the dark waters shine,
A sound of sighing trembles in the breeze ;
The west wind brings the wistful pilgrims' moan.
And Circe scans far on the dim sky-line
The white sails of unnumbered argosies,
Like flakes of snow upon the crimson seas.

BLOSSOM

IN silence in the night, an angel came,
And breathed a song upon the wintry earth,
And lit within its frozen heart a flame ;
And the divine still mystery of birth
Crept trembling through the slumberous fields and trees.
With the first glimmer of the April morn,
Some wondrous thing and new
Spoke in the whisper of the dawn's cold breeze ;—
The world, awakening through its tears of dew,
Smiled, for in darkness blossom had been born.

As though the dawn had flung to earth her veil,
The dew-drenched blossom glistens in the sun ;
Softer than snow, and as a mirage frail,
It hangs in blushing films divinely spun.
What silent plotting powers have planned this sight ?
It is as though the never-resting loom
Of time had ceased to ply ;
And the thin web of hours had taken flight
Before the advent of Eternity,—
As darkness, when the dawn breaks into bloom.

Alas ! the vision is a wistful smile

Upon the cheating features of the hour ;
Earth toils in travail, beauty is born, awhile
To shine like flame, to wither like a flower.
The fashioned wonders of man's hand and brain,
The living marble, the immortal song,
The poet's soaring dream,
Rise like the blossom, like the blossom wane ;
And on the moving surface of Time's stream
Their life is neither briefer nor more long.

Sorrow descends upon the mortal sight,
Sorrow for beauty of fair things that fade,
Till one strong thought consoles the hopeless night,
That from the wealth of God, where worlds are made
(The Treasure-house that nothing can decrease),
A never-ending tide shall ebb and flow ;
The note must sound and die,—
The eternal symphony shall never cease ;
Divinely made, thought, shape and melody
Shall come like blossom and like blossom go.

THE SONG OF THE NAMELESS

OH ! who are these men marching in procession dark
and long,
To the sound of mournful music, and a tired triumphant
song ?
With torches, and with trumpets, and with banners red
as blood ?
They carry neither sword nor gun ; but there's a trembling
thud

Of a hundred thousand footsteps, and the sky re-echoes
loud

With the wistful marching murmur of the long dark crowd.

Have you come to crown a Cæsar ? to bury a dead king ?
What is the secret message of the murmured song you sing ?
Are you bearing a brave hero who has fallen in the wars ?
Are you singing of his glory that is writ among the stars ?
Are you leading saint or singer to be crowned with a gold
wreath ?

Are you mournful or exultant ? Is it life you sing, or
death ?

We are bearing a dead comrade to his final resting bed ;
We are singing of the fallen, of the unremembered dead.
The man we bring was of us, but we do not know his name ;
He worked for us ; he fell before the hour of triumph came ;
His body is our banner, and his soul our battle-cry,
The emblem of the unknown men who in the darkness die.

Why is your song so mirthless if the hour of triumph has
come ?

A million of our comrades are now lying stiff and dumb.

Why are your ranks so sombre and your music soft and
slow ?

We marched through crimson rivers, and there still is
blood to flow.

Why are your faces worn and wan ? We come from very
far,

And not from fields of battle—all our life has been a war.

How can our march be mirthful, when there's yet so far
to go ?

How can our song be joyous when there is still blood to
flow ?

But we've done what in all ages now can never be undone :
We have torn away the curtain, we have let in the
 bright sun
To the prison-house of darkness ; we have broken down
 the bars ;
And nothing now can hide from us the sun, the moon,
 the stars.

Sad is our marching music : it was born of our despair.
But hark ! and you will hear the note of those who little care
If their fate be death or exile, and dishonour and disgrace ;
Who will give up mother, brother, friend, the darling
 one's embrace ;
And without the martyr's glory, and without the hero's
 fame,
Are content to die for freedom, and to leave behind no name.

Sad is our marching music : but pay heed and you will
 hear
The pulse of dumb resistance, and the heart that knows not
 fear ;
The voices that cry out that truth is truth, the lie a lie,
Which only Death can silence, and whose triumph is to die.
We were weak and we were vanquished ; we were scat-
 tered, crushed and beat ;
But, hark ! the hundred thousand come !—the fruits of
 our defeat.

Like bubbles on the water, and like helpless flakes of snow,
We leave no trace behind us as we swiftly come and go.
But the storms of God are brewing ; the mountains huge
 and dumb
Will melt and loose the torrents, and the floods of spring
 will come ;

The wonderful clean waters will descend and drown the
earth,
And all the morning stars shall sing at Freedom's hour of
birth.

And that is why we're marching in procession dark and
long,
To the sound of mournful music, and a tired triumphant
song,
With torches and with trumpets, and with banners red as
blood.
We carry neither gun nor sword ; but there's a trembling
thud
Of a hundred thousand footsteps, and the sky re-echoes
loud
With the wistful marching murmur of the long dark crowd.

THE CLOWN

THERE was once a poor clown all dressed in white,
In a dungeon, chained to the bars ;
And he danced all day, and he danced all night,
To the sound of the dancing stars.

" O clown, silly clown, oh why do you dance ?
You know you can never be free.
You are tied by the leg to the strings of chance,
But you dance like a captive flea."

" My chain is heavy, my dungeon is dark,
I know I can never be free,
In my heart, in my heart there's a dancing spark,
And the stars make music for me.

“ Oh ! muffle my cell and rivet my chains,
And fetter my feet and my hands,
My soul is a horse of foam without reins,
That dances on deathless sands.”

SIGURD

To E. P. G.

THE king of men and heroes lay asleep,
Between the forest and the quiet sea.
His army slept along the gleaming sand,
Awaiting the great battle of the morn.
Out of the sultry sky there seemed to fall
Great drops of blood, and like a lonely ghost
The pale sea cried, while in the purple west
A star emerged not seen before of man,
Outshining silvery Sirius and red Mars.
And phantom armies battled in the clouds.

To Sigurd as he slept there came a dream
Of a sad, shining Angel with veiled eyes
And sable wings that rustled drearily,
Like autumn leaves blown to the doors of men ;
And bending down she spake. In the hushed night
Her solemn words were sadder than the call
Of Roland's horn resounding in the hills
Of Roncevalles, when with his failing might
He blew a farewell blast to Charlemain.

And thus the Angel spake : “ Make ready, Prince,
I am the holy harbinger of Death.

I am the Angel of battle ; I appear
To men that unto Death are consecrate.
To-morrow in ranks of battle we will meet ;
Amid the lightnings of the broken swords
Thou shalt behold unveiled my terrible eyes,
And hear my fatal bugle-call ; and I
Will bear thee swiftly through the starry ways
Of night, and stormy space ; but first must thou
Give ear unto the message of the gods.

“ Because thou hast been glorious in thy life,
Flinched not, nor swerved from the tremendous task :
Because thou hast endured calamity,
And grief proportioned to thy mighty heart,
The gods have stored a certain gift for thee.
To-morrow thou shalt die. Nor may the gods,
Not even they, reknit the severed thread ;
They bid thee choose the manner of thy life
For all eternity.”

The Angel sang
Of high Valhalla where the heroes dwell.
“ A wondrous light shines in the Warriors’ hall,
And quiring stars intone their morning song.
Say, wilt thou soar to loud Valhalla’s hall,
And take thy place among the vanished kings ?
There shouldst thou drain the cup that overcomes
All care, and all disheartening weariness,
Anguish and memories, and heals the soul.”

Then Sigurd lifted his kind sea-grey eyes
And smiled most sadly, as an aged Queen,
Who once had seemed a dazzling garden-flower,
Smiles wistfully to see her grandchild weave
A coronal of daisies and wild grass.

And Sigurd to the Angel answered : “ No :
For in the phantom feast, although the cup
Should drown the memory of mournful things,
Though steeped in slumberous ease, the restless soul
Would in her dream uneasily regret ;
And, as a vision captive in the brain
Lies furled and folded, so the past would dwell
Within the present. My desire would seek
The shadowy years that beckon like far lights,
The glimmering days I could not quite recall,
The past I might not utterly forget.
Moreover, her whom I have loved on earth,
Brunhilda, in Valhalla would not dwell.
And how without her could I dwell in bliss ? ”

And then her voice grew gentle as a flute
Blown o’er the levels of a glassy lake
At twilight. “ Wouldst thou the dominion
Of earthly paradises, pleasant fields,
And chaliced lilies and white asphodel ?
There are the orchards of immortal fruits—
Lands ever golden with ungarnered corn,
And yellow roses teeming with brown bees.
Like stars in a deserted firmament,
Thou and Brunhilda shining will abide
By crystal streams and cool melodious woods,
Where nightingales and fireflies never leave
The aisles of dusk ; or near some shadowed pool
Starred with the water-lilies’ golden shrines.”

And Sigurd smiled, “ Nay, but the past would rise
And drown in tears our unforgetting souls.
As when the moon, a luring sorceress,
Casting enchantment on the stealthy tide,

Compels the salt and bitter flood to creep
And nestle in the inlets of the world,
And fringe the darkling beaches with pale surf.
Thus round the island of our blissfulness
The envious flood of memory would rise.
Soon should we pine in listless apathy,
And yearn with inconsolable regret."

The Angel questioned Sigurd once again :
" Wouldst thou another world wherein to love,
Labour and struggle on the battlefields
Of old, and win the crown of bitter leaves ?
Taste the fleet minute, dizzy and divine,
Of rapture, and then feel the hand of Fate
Withdraw the chalice from unsated lips ?
The agony of parting, and the years
Of treachery and falsehood ? the dark web
Of poisonous deceit encompassing
The love not slander nor the tongues of men
Nor power of gods might else have overcome ?
Wouldst thou renew thy love, to be betrayed
And fall beneath calamity once more ? "

Then before Sigurd, like a pageant, passed
The ghosts of all the ancient troubled years.
He saw the forest where, a careless child,
He lived in a green cave, while rustling leaves
And sighing branches made a cradle-song.
He saw the tall trees shiver in the dawn,
And heard the dewy matins of the lark ;
He trampled meadows of anemones,
White crocus fields and lilies of the valley,

Which paved with ghostly silver the dim floor
Beneath the dome of Dawn, until they gleamed
At sunrise through a cloud of mist and dew,
As tapers through a veil of incense burn.

Once more he wandered through the coverts green.
And mocked the blackbird on his hemlock flute.
Through golden drowsy noons in the deep grass
He lay half sleeping, and yet half aware
Of woodland sounds, and the delicious noise
Of summer ; the warm droning insect-hum,
Cuckoo and calling dove, and the cool glimpse
Of speckled fishes in the running stream.
And when the twilight made the woodways dim,
And veiled the skies with a mysterious pall
Of emerald, he would seek a dark recess
Of leaves and moss, to sleep, while overhead
Hesperus quivered in the liquid sky,
And nightingales made music to the moon.

He saw again the years of wandering :
The travel over many lands and seas,
The years of service for an alien King ;
And at the last Brunhilda on the hill,
Encompassed with a ring of snow-white fire.
Once more he kissed the sleeping Queen to life
And caught the splendour of her opening eyes.
And in that daylight all the fire grew dim.
And then a vision of the lagging years
Revealed the mystery and all the threads
Close-woven in the tangled loom of Fate—
By reason of what spell unwittingly
He won Brunhilda for an alien King.

At length the awakening from the trance, the dawn
Of sunless morning and the huge despair.

Thus, in a dim procession, passed the years,
The crowded years of his tormented life.
And Sigurd said to the Angel, " I have loved
Once, and for ever, and in eternity.
Such love as this can never be again.
Though I were to be born in a new shape,
And banished to the farthest star of Heaven,
And though I drank of the oblivious wave,
Yet if I met my love again, my soul
Would recognise and clasp her, soul to soul.
Then like to exile angels we should seem,
Or children banished from the blissful years
Of childhood, and returning there anew
After long toil, not able to regain
The childish soul, nor find the old delight.
I that have battled though my soul despaired,
And loved with love more great, more sad than death,
I that have borne irreparable wrong,
Which ages of bright bliss cannot repair ;
I, knowing that the hour of Fate has come,
Would fain at last possess the whole of peace.
Let me be drenched in Death's divinest dew,
Let me be cradled in immensity,
Let me inherit all oblivion,
And the impregnable night of the dumb grave,—
The night unvisited by any star,
The sleep unvexed by any wandering dream.
Then shall I be rewarded with the void,
The inviolable darkness and the dust,
The secrecy, the silence, and the sleep
Unbroken by the pangs of any morn."

So Sigurd chose.

The morrow in the fight
He beheld silver armour and the eyes
Unveiled and terrible. Now once again
He tasted rapture dizzy and divine
And knew the gods had heeded his one prayer.

Then the strange star not seen before of man
Sank in the quiet sea as Sigurd died.

And somewhere in the vastness Sigurd sleeps.

SONNETS

I WATCHED you in the distance tall and pale,
Like a swift swallow in a pearly sky ;
Your eyelids drooped like petals wearily,
Your face was like a lily of the vale.

You had the softness of all Summer days,
The silver radiance of the twilight hour,
The mystery of bluebell-haunted ways,
The passion of the white syringa's flower.

I watched you, and I knew that I had found
The long-delaying, long-expected Spring ;
I knew my heart had found a tune to sing ;

That strength to soar was in my spirit's wing ;
That life was full of a triumphant sound,
That death could only be a little thing.

Ω ΚΑΛΑ, Ω ΧΑΡΙΕΣΣΑ

I SAW you by the summer candlelight :—
You put to shame the sparkle of the gems,
The lights, the flashing of the diadems,
The moon and all the stars of summer night.

I saw you in the radiant morning hour :—
You put to shame the white rose and the red ;
Your chiselled lips, your little lovely head,
Were fairer than the petals of a flower.

And on the shaven surface of the lawn,
You moved like music, and you smiled like dawn,—
The leaves, the flowers, the dragon-flies, the dew,

Beside you seemed the stuff of coarser clay ;
And all the glory of the summer day
A background for the wonder that was you.

GOOD-BYE !—It was a casual good-bye :
I was not going far, nor yet for long.
“ Good-bye ! and you will write, and in the throng,
You will not quite forget, nor yet shall I.”

And yet it seemed to me, I know not why,
The birds were singing a most mournful song ;
I seemed to hear a tinkling funeral gong,
“ Summer is dead,” it said, and “ youth must die.”

Yes, though while life shall last, a subtle thread
Shall bind us, yet the wondrous hour is dead,
The hour of hours I thought could never die ;

The dream has spread irrevocable wings ;
In vain for me the lark his message sings ;—
Oh ! would that with the dream the pain could fly !

GERMANY

"Hier darf ich sein"

THE little town that on the hilltop stood
(Beneath the Neckar flowed towards the Rhine) ;—
The smiling slopes of cornfields and of vine,—
The song that echoed in the silent wood ;—
The happy crowd that kept its holiday
(It warmed the heart of Faust at Easter-time) ;
The pointed gables stiff with ice and rime ;—
The gothic tower dark in the evening grey.—
Yes, once there was a corner there for me,
A place of kindly warmth and simple joys ;
A pipe to smoke, a mug of foaming beer,
And lofty music and sweet songs to hear ;
And fairy-tales, and children's games and toys,
And tapers twinkling on the Christmas tree.

ITALY

THE almond-trees of Tuscany in flower,
Narcissus and the tulip growing wild ;
White oxen ; and, a lily undefiled,
Beyond the misty plain, the marble tower ;
The roses and the corn upon the hill,
The Judas-tree against the solid blue ;
The fireflies, and the downy owl's too-whoo,
Thy Aziola, Shelley, plaintive still.
The lisp of Baiæ's phosphorescent foam ;
And Venice like a bubble made of dew,
A shell transfigured with the rainbow's hue ;
The Appian Way beneath a sullen sky
(The shepherd's pipe is like a seagull's cry),
And in a silver rift, eternal Rome.

SEVILLE

THE orange blossoms in the Alcazar,
Where roses and syringas are in flower ;
The blinding glory of the morning hour ;
The eyes that gleam behind a twisted bar ;
The women on the balconies,—a smile ;
The barrel-organs, and the blazing heat ;
The awning hanging high across the street ;
A dark mantilla in a sombre aisle.
A fountain tinkling in a shady court ;
The gold arena of the bull-ring's feast ;
The coloured crowd acclaiming perilous sport ;
The sudden silence when they hold their breath,
While the *torero* gently plays with death,
And flicks the horns of the tremendous beast.

GREECE

THE Spring had scattered poppies on the land,
The Spring was saying her secret to the breeze ;
In the translucent shallows of green seas,
A fisherman, a trident in his hand,
Was casting shining fishes to the sand,
And wading in the water to his knees ;
And still I hear the crickets and the bees,
The hidden hoofs, the ringing saraband.
I see the temples fringed with breaking foam,
As pink as daybreak in the silver dust ;
The Parthenon at sunset large and dim,
Smouldering against the purple mountain's crust ;
And far away on the ocean's blazing rim,
The phantom ship that brought Ulysses home.

RUSSIA

WHAT can the secret link between us be ?
Why does your song's unresting ebb and flow
Speak to me in a language that I know ?
Why does the burden of your mystery

Call like the message of a friend to me ?
Why do I love your vasts of corn or snow,
The tears and laughter of your sleepless woe,
The murmur of your brown immensity ?

I cannot say, I only know that when
I hear your soldiers singing in the street,
I see your peasants reaping in the wheat,
Your children playing on the road, your men
At prayer before a shrine, I wish them well.
It is with you, with you that I would dwell.

A JUNE NIGHT IN RUSSIA

A CONCERT. Hark ! the prelude's opening bar !
Played by the sheep bells tinkling on the hill ;
Dogs bark and frogs are croaking near the mill,
The watchman's rattle beats the time afar.

Like water bubbling in a magic jar,
The nightingale begins a liquid trill,
Another answers ; and the world's so still,
You'd think that you could hear that falling star.

I scarcely see for light the stars that swim
Aloof in skies not dark but only dim.
The women's voices echo far away.

And on the road two lovers sing a song :
They sing the joy of love that lasts a day :
The sorrow of love that lasts a whole life long.

HARVEST IN RUSSIA

THE breeze has come at last. The day was long ;
And in the lustrous air the dark bats fly ;
And, hark ! It is the reapers passing by,
I hear the burden of their peaceful song.

A voice intones : and swift the answering throng
Take up the theme and build the harmony ;
The music swells and soars into the sky
And dies away intense, and clear, and strong.

Now through the trees the stately shapes I see
Of women with the attributes of toil,
Calm in their sacerdotal majesty ;

And backward, through the drifting mist of years,
I see the festal rites that blessed the soil,
As old as the first drop of mortal tears.

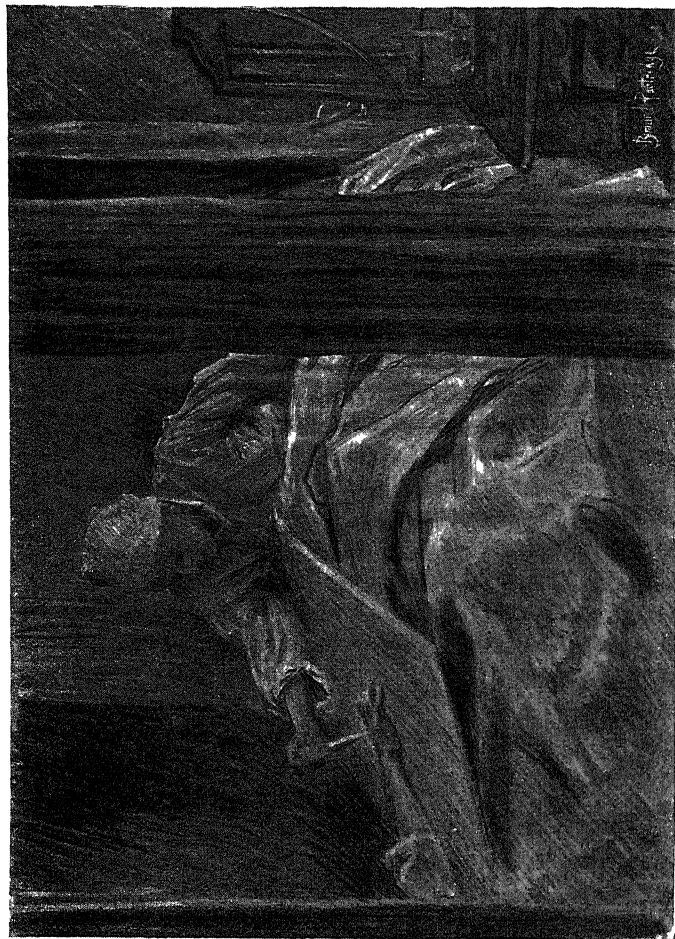
DOSTOYEVSKY

You healed the sore, you made the fearful brave,
They bless you for your lasting legacy :
The balm, the tears, the fragrant charity
You sought and treasured in your living grave.

The gifts you humbly took you greatly gave,
For solace of the soul in agony ;
When through the bars the brutal passions pry,
And mock the bonds of the celestial slave.

You wandered in the uttermost abyss ;
And there, amidst the ashes and the dust,
You spoke no word of anger nor of pride ;

You found the prints of steps divine to kiss ;
You looked right upwards to the stars, you cried :
“ *Hosanna to the Lord, for He is just.*”



HE DROVE HIS HUNTING KNIFE DOWN INTO THE BACK OF THE HAND

WAGNER

O STRANGE awakening to a world of gloom,
And baffled moonbeams and delirious stars,
Of souls that moan behind forbidden bars,
And waving forests swept by wings of doom ;
Of heroes falling in unhappy fight,
And wingèd messengers from eyries dim ;
And mountains ringed with flame, and shapes that swim
In the deep river's green translucent night.
O restless soul, for ever seeking bliss,
Athirst for ever and unsatisfied,
Whether the woodland starts to the echoing horn,
Or dying Tristram moans by shores forlorn,
Or Siegfried rides through fire to wake his bride,
And shakes the whirling planets with a kiss.

SHELLEY

SINGER of cloud and star and rushing stream,
Let me bring but one garland to thy shrine,
For when a boy I drank of the dews divine
That in thy rainbow-coloured chalice gleam.
I scaled the silver ladder of thy dream,
And dizzy with the wonder of that wine,
I heard the song, I saw the eyes that shine
Unveiled, within the sanctuary supreme.
Then, like Actæon I became the prey,
The flying quarry of remorseless hounds ;
Hark ! in the distance I can hear them bay !
But in my heart the vision and the voice
Endure ; and though they slay me, I rejoice—
I saw that light, I heard those starry sounds.

PHÈDRE

(Sarah Bernhardt)

HER gesture is the soaring of a hymn,
Her voice has robbed their spell from rustling trees ;
And like the frozen music of a frieze,
Calm, as she moves majestic, every limb.

Clear as a crystal beaker's sounding rim,
Her heart gives voice to sobbing melodies,
And her frame trembles, swept by passion's breeze,
And sultry clouds her blazing eyes bedim.

A sorceress, the victim of her snare,
A wounded eagle struggling to be free,
Whose kingdom was the sunlight and the snows,—

More queenly than all empresses is she,
Discrowned albeit, defeated and in despair ;
The stricken lily puts to shame the rose.

THE WOUNDED

THE wounded lie and groan upon the plain ;
And one there is whom it is vain to lift ;
So give him water. It is the last gift,
And very soon he shall not thirst again.

All white and gold the Chief with a troop of horse
Trots by. The soldier opens smiling eyes ;
Now at the latest gasp of life he cries :
“ Long live ! ” with all his feeble flickering force.

Before he said his say he died content.
And we, the wounded on life's battlefield,
Enrolled and sent to war to fight and die,

When conquered by the mortal wound, we cry
" Long live ! " remembering our sacrament,
When God with all His universe rides by.

MANCHURIA, 1904.

CANDLEMAS

THE town is half awake ; the nave, the choir,
Are dark, and all is dim, within, without ;
But every chapel fringed with the devout,
Is bright with February flowers of fire.

At Mass, a thousand years ago in Rome,
Thus Priest, thus Server at the altar bowed ;
Thus knelt, thus blessed itself the kneeling crowd,
At Dawn, within the secret catacomb.

Thus shall they meet for Mass, until the day
The glory of the world shall pass away.
And beauty far away from human reach,

And power, and wealth beyond all mortal price,
And glory that outsoars all thought, all speech,
Speak in the whispered words of sacrifice.

VITA NUOVA

I

I FOUND the clue I sought not, in the night,
While wandering in a pathless maze of gloom ;
The sky was hid behind huge shapes of doom ;
There was no moon, nor any star in sight.

My hopes, my dreams, and my faithless creeds were slain,
Like corpses on a battlefield they lay ;
The world was but a graveyard dark with clay ;
The stifling cloud denied one drop of rain ;

When from the giddy marge of the abyss,
I cried aloud in agony and fear,
When, suddenly, it seemed my single tear
Stretched and became a shining bridge to bliss.

I stood before a topless gate. Within
I guessed the light, I dared not enter in.

II

One day I heard a whisper : " Wherefore wait ?
Why linger in a separated porch ?
Why nurse the flicker of a severed torch ?
The fire is there, ablaze beyond the gate.

Why tremble, foolish soul ? Why hesitate ?
However faint the knock, it will be heard."
I knocked, and swiftly came the answering word,
Which bade me enter to my own estate.

I found myself in a familiar place ;
And there my broken soul began to mend ;
I knew the smile of every long-lost face—

They whom I had forgot remembered me ;
I knelt, I knew—it was too bright to see—
The welcome of a King who was my friend.

III

My treasure and my resting-place are found,
My mother-land, my immemorial home ;
Beyond the reefs of treasonable foam,
I know the lights that flash upon the sound.

Lightning may strike, and hurricane may blow,
Whatever shall befall, I cannot fear :
Whether the hour be far away or near,
That tranquil harbour shines and waits, I know.

I know. There is no mortal word to say ;
For what there is to speak is vast and dim ;
But haply, if God please, beyond the day,

Delivered from the bars and bonds of speech,
Made strong with language which the angels teach,
I'll share my secret with the Seraphim.

1913-1914

I

I SAW you smiling over broken flowers,
Yourself a flower unbroken and more rare
Than petals that make sweet the evening air,
And load with scent the Summer's indolent hours.

Your nodding head, the ripple of your hair,
Like the shy sun that shines through April showers,
Leans from a fairyland of twinkling towers,
And beckons me to an enchanted stair.

Your eyes, your eyes, divide me from my sleep ;
The echo of your laughter makes me weep,
You fill the measureless world, you frailest thing .

And in the silence of my deepest dream
Your beauty wanders like a whispering stream,
And brushes past me like an angel's wing.

II

To-night the thoughts of you drift round my bed
Like thistledown ; I weave them into rhymes ;
And as I fall to sleep I hear their chimes
Building gay music high above my head,

And prayers and poems all in praise of you ;
And, happy in my fading dream, I say :
“ There will be something ready with the day
To send to her, to speak for me, to sue.”

But when the morning comes, the nimble words
Have fled into the air like frightened birds,
That answer my soft whistle with a scream ;

And only the rebellious thoughts remain :
The baffled blind desire to find again
The accents that were docile in my dream.

III

I think God made your soul for better things
Than futile laughter with the cackling crew.
Surely He meant the spirit that is you
To soar above the world with steadfast wings ;

To hear the music of celestial strings ;
To keep the flame within you always true
Unto your own high pole ; and pure as dew
The fountain that within you sometimes sings.

Surely you are an exile in the noise
Of crowded markets ; alien to the toys
That dazzle others, firing them with greed ;

And, like a seagull, lost upon the land,
You long for the large breakers and the sand,
The strong salt air, the surf, the drifting weed.

IV

The world was waiting for the thunder's birth,
To-day, and cloud was piled on sullen cloud :
Then strong, and straight, and clean, and cool, and loud,
The rain came down, and drenched the stifling earth.

The clouds have lifted, drifted and rolled by ;
The riotous wet leaves with music ring,
The nightingale begins once more to sing,
And tender as a rose-leaf is the sky.

I wonder if some day this stifling care
That weighs upon my heart will fall in showers ?
I wonder if the thunder-laden hours
Will roll away and leave such limpid air,

And if my soul will riot in the rain,
And sing as loudly as that bird again ?

V

The anguish of those days, the days that were :
I thought that it was sleeping in its tomb ;
Those soaring hopes and dreams, that sudden gloom,
The slow sure operations of despair.

The merciless invasion of the day,
That shone on what was once a house of Light,
With shining rooms and walls of chrysolite,
And now, a ruin, blacken'd in decay.

Those nights when ancient stains and ugly scars,
Like warders watched the soul within its cell ;
And Fear tramped past, a silent sentinel ;
And memory made mouths between the bars.

The tears that rained at night upon the bed ;
The waking wonder, " When shall I be dead ? "

VI

You touched the wound that was no longer sore,
You fanned the bitter ash of memory ;
And all that might have been and could not be,
What should have been and shall be nevermore.

You spoke the word, and the forbidden door
Opened again upon the smiling sea,
Once more the phantom of felicity
Beckoned and called from the enchanted shore.

But you I neither blame nor I accuse
More than I blame the landscape that with fire
Kindles a painter's heart and with desire ;
That hold him like a demon, and refuse

To free his spirit, till the vision shines
In strong brave colours and unfaltering lines.

VII

I picked this cornflower in the rustling rye,
These briar roses from a luscious hedge,
This purple iris in the woodland sedge.
It was the quaver of the dragon-fly,

Dropped like a piece of azure from the sky,
That led me to that pool amongst the trees—
And there I lay and listened to the bees,
And murmured sadly to myself : “ Good-bye.”


Good-bye ! these perished petals that I send
Will tell you that this truly is the end ;
Good-bye to you and to the gracious hours.

These briar roses grew beside the stream—
No, no ! I shall not send you faded flowers—
I need them for the grave of my lost dream.

SOSNOFKA, *June* 1914.

PULCHRITUDO

THE presage of all beauty that shall be,
The ghost of all dead beauty in the past,
Have met together in mortality :
This is incarnate beauty come at last.



TRIOLETS

I

Written at 4 a.m. in the Trans-Siberian Railway near Chita

I WISH I was dead,
And lay deep in the grave.
I've a pain in my head.
I wish I was dead,
In a coffin of lead—
With the wise and the brave—
I wish I was dead,
And lay deep in the grave.

II

Written at 4.45 a.m.

Thank God I'm alive
In the light of the sun !
It's a quarter to five ;
Thank God I'm alive !
Now the hum of the hive
Of the world has begun,
Thank God I'm alive
In the light of the sun !

THE BLACK PRINCE
PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

KING EDWARD III.

EDWARD, DUKE OF AQUITAINE. (*The Black Prince.*)

THE DUKE OF LANCASTER. (*His Brother.*)

JOHN CHANDOS.

GUY OF BLOIS.

AN ASTROLOGER.

A VETERAN.

LITTLE EDWARD. (*The Duke's Son.*)

RICHARD. (*The Duke's Son.*)

PRINCESS JOAN. (*Edward's Wife.*)

A NURSE.

MARGARET. (*A Court Lady, afterwards spoken of as ALICE FERRERS.*)

MARY. (*Her Maid.*)

BARONS, MASQUERS, COURTIERS, SOLDIERS, PRIESTS, ETC.

ACTS I., II., III., AT BORDEAUX.

ACT IV., IN ENGLAND.

*Three years elapse between Acts II. and III., and four
years between Acts III. and IV.*

ACT I

SCENE I

*Hall in the Black Prince's Palace at Bordeaux.
A VETERAN, the NURSE, and a COURTIER.*

VETERAN. To-morrow, Edward, our right noble Prince,
Edward, the eldest son of England's King,
Whom God preserve,—the Duke of Aquitaine,
The heir of England, Edward, the Black Prince,
Makes war against the bastard of Castille,
With John of Gaunt his brother, and with the flower
Of England's chivalry. Before the dawn
He marches ; so bestir betimes to-morrow
To bid farewell, and wish Godspeed.

NURSE. Not once
The Prince has gone to war but I have held
His stirrup with a blessing and a prayer.

VETERAN. Do you remember him a little child ?

NURSE. A child ? I mind him ever since his birth :
He at the first grew quickly as the grass
In April, or a lamb in windy March.
When came the summer, how he would pester me
To take him to the hayfields ; more than aught
He loved to gambol in the hay, or lie
On a green hillock, gazing at the heavens,
And listening to the music of the scythe :
And oft, when I had searched and panted long,
I found him buried in the hay ; dear heart,
How he would fright me by the water's edge !

I mind the day when, screaming for sheer joy,
He ran to meet me with a speckled egg,
The first that he had found. I mind my tears,
The time when he set sail for France and Crécy,
All clad, my tender lamb, in heavy armour,
And mounted on a warhorse, with a sword
Beside him, big enough to please a giant.
He was turned sixteen years ; beneath his helmet
His innocent fresh face was like a cherub's :
Oh ! 'twas a sorry shame I thought, that day,
To take my pretty darling to the war,
And bitterly I wept ; but he was strong
And tough as a young sapling in the forest,
And nimble as a bee.

VETERAN.

Was that in London ?

NURSE. The day he started by his father's side
He rode along the streets of London town,
Cantering apace, bright as a silver penny,
Past us he flashed like the blue kingfisher
That darts across the stream. His golden locks
Streamed to the wind like silk ; his eyes, God bless them,
Were bluer than the sky, so that I thought
St. George himself had come down from the heavens
To fight for England and protect our King.

VETERAN. I saw him in the twilight after Crécy,
His armour dented with a thousand blows,
And dulled with stains of blood. I never saw
A fairer vision of impetuous youth.
He had been revelling in the thickest fight,
Sure in the dealing of a deadly blow,
As is a kestrel swooping on his prey,
And light and buoyant as a dragon-fly
He would brush past with noble nonchalance
A certain death ; and when he met his father,

Glowing with mingled modesty and pleasure,
There was no crown could equal the reward
Of the proud tear that flashed in the King's eye.

COURTIER. I saw him, too, when Poitiers' fight was
finished ;

When in the crimson tent he served King John ;
Oh ! then he seemed the Prince of courtesy
And comeliness. As royal as a Lily,
The silver Fleur-de-lis of France's banner ;
And modest as the English rose. The minstrels
Sang of him as another Ganymede,
Famed in old song, as he who ministered
To Jove and the proud gods in their gold hall.

NURSE. And he, my precious lad, is still the noblest ;
The Prince of grace, the Lord of courtesy,
And the most gallant soldier in the world.
See, here he comes with all his goodly train.

*Enter the BLACK PRINCE, PRINCESS JOAN,
KNIGHTS and COURTIER.*

EDWARD. Fair Lords and friends, I bid good-night to you.
To-morrow with the rising sun we march
Against King Henry of Castille, and though
They have du Guesclin fighting on their side,
And we be few against a mightier foe,
Let us not be dismayed ; for neither strength
Nor victory abides in multitudes,
But is to whom God gives it. If He will
That victory be ours, then ours the glory ;
And if we die, I have the noble Lord
My father, and beside him two brave brothers,
And you have each of you a trusty friend
Who will avenge us well. I pray you, sirs,
Fight well, and if it please God and St. George,

I shall not play my part unworthily.
Thus till to-morrow, noble sirs, farewell.

[*Exit all except* JOAN.]

JOAN. The armies march to-morrow, then, at dawn ?
And I shall miss you during the long summer.

EDWARD. I shall return before All-Hallows Eve.

JOAN. So long as that ? I thought this Spanish War
Could last but a little time—it is too long—
Nay sure : you will be here before the autumn ?

EDWARD. Perchance I never shall return.

JOAN (*laughing*). Oh, foolish !

What hope have the few rebels of Castille ?

EDWARD. Fortune is fickle and the foe is false.

JOAN. Then go you not at all ; for you have fame
Enough, and surely plenteous store of laurels :
And let your brother Lancaster take charge
Of the great army, and remain at home.
It is a timely thought that you should stay ;
I should have said it sooner.

EDWARD. Would you hear

It said an English host had gone to war
And that the Black Prince had remained at home
With women folk ? for he had lost all liking
And stomach for the fight ?

JOAN. Nay, but why fright me ?

EDWARD. I shall be home before the summer's past.
Then shall we hold a gorgeous festival
To celebrate our triumph. We shall conquer ;
It is my habit to return victorious.

JOAN. I trust the strength of your right hand ; and Fortune
Has ever favoured you. And now, my Lord,
I bid good-night to you ; and it were well
That you should go to rest : for on the morrow
You start before the dawn. I shall be there

To hold the stirrup, and to say farewell.

Good-night, my Lord : you are in need of rest.

EDWARD. Good-night, sweet Joan, good-night until
to-morrow. [Exit EDWARD.]

JOAN. In truth this life of ours is a strange thing ;
“ Good-night, my noble Lord ; Sweet Joan, good-night ”
We say, or we do ask an anxious question ;
Or feign a foolish fear : and well I know
That I might go my everlasting journey,
And he would scarcely heed it. Well he knows
That I know well : and though I am not heartless,
The gods have steeled my heart with carelessness.
For, had I loved, then greatly had I suffered
To see him love another, and not me.
The Heavens are just ; for they, denying love,
Have granted me the precious boon of beauty.

[Looks at herself in a small glass.]

For naught on earth would I exchange the gift.
She whom he loves is far less fair than that ;
Oh what can match the rising ecstasy
Of reading an unutterable wonder
Upon the face of men ? To see my beauty
Reflected in the speechless gaze of eyes ;
To see when I fling loose my hair and open
The splendour of my eyes, a thousand faces,
The vast rough crowd, sway in a strange amazement,
To hear them murmur like a rustling forest.
I thank the Heavens for my careless heart.
One heart-beat more would mar the peerless peace.
The world shall kneel in wonder at my knees ;
Whilst I a listless Deity will smile.
Sweet to me is the incense of the world,
And very sweet is the untroubled calm,
The carelessness divine. I am content,

[Exit.]

SCENE II

Margaret's garden. EDWARD and MARGARET.

EDWARD. I could not come before, the tedious feast
Prolonged itself while veterans retold
Tales of past fights and well-forgotten deeds.

MARGARET. It matters little now that you are come ;
To-morrow I shall wait, in vain, alone,
And you will be who knows how far away ?

EDWARD. But for a little : a few months.

MARGARET. Like years
For me those heavy months. But I am sad
Not only for the absence, though that brings
A shiver from the wings of Death : I feel
That envious Fate premeditates some blow
And that misfortune hovers in the air
Like a grim bird of prey. Yes, I am sad,
But not with sorrow only ; threatening shades
Pursue me, and a great uneasiness
Lies heavy on my heart. I fear the gods
Have aimed an arrow at our happiness ;
I see the creeping shadow of eclipse ;
I hear Fate's stealthy footfall.

EDWARD. Nay, but wherefore
Think on such things ? I love you : that is all
There is to think on. And my love is strong
As aught save death.

MARGARET. As strong as Death perchance ;
But love is wax between Fate's iron fingers.
All things have been too beautiful this year ;
When winter was but halfway through, we heard
The wayward footfall of the spring. Too soon

The crocus and the swallow came ; too soon
The orchard put on a white bridal veil
And hills grew red with tulips. Not a storm
Dishevelled the frail pageant, nor disturbed
The slender miracle of blushing snow,
The blossoms soft as ocean-spray that hung
About the cherry trees. Ah !—well I knew
That some calamity was lurking near.

EDWARD. Nay, why calamity ? I shall return
Before the nightingale has ceased to sing.
And we in the blue darkness of the orchard
Will listen while he serenades the rose ;
We in the stillness of the dawn will hear
The murmur of the roses answering,
That only lovers know ; and we shall wander
In the deep dewy grass of starlit woods,
Through thickets bright with fireflies ; we shall hark
How, far away, soft waterfalls and streams
Chime in the whispering dome of summer night.
I feel no boding of calamity,
Since in the ordered scheme of things it is
That I should go to war, and thence return.
A conqueror.

MARGARET. I like not this campaign
In fevered lands against a treacherous foe.
And yet 'tis not the battle that I fear ;
The Fates would deem it a cheap victory
To kill you ; not thus open-wise they deal
With mortals ; rather will they find a way
Of poisoning our love, or sundering
Our lives, and, as they deal out the despair,
Will mock us with a useless recompense
And strengthen the then hateful chain of life.
For I am sure they weave some dark design ;

Our bliss has been too wondrous ; it has lingered
Too long at the bright zenith. Suddenly
The night will fall before we see the sunset.

EDWARD. Ah ! brood not on the dreams of fearful fancy.
To-day is ours : why trouble for the morrow ?

MARGARET. To-morrow I shall be alone. 'Tis well
To be prepared ; I ever have been ready
To hear the extremest sentence Fate can pass ;
But you are never ready ; like a child
You do believe the gods are merciful,
You are so happy, and you wish so well
To all, and how could any one, you think,
Wish harm to you ? but I know well the Fates
Are neither kind nor careless ; without pity
They carry out immutable designs
And sacrifice the bravest and the best
To shape the world according to their whim.
'Tis well I know it ; then, when first I saw you,
As you did ride into Bordeaux that day,
Splendid and modest in your darkling armour,
Crowned with gold laurels, on a chafing charger,
While trumpets sounded and the hautboys spake,
And jewelled banners fluttered in the wind—
A captive King beside you, and the glory
Of conquest all about you like a cloud—
Then, when the shout of " Poitiers " rent the air,
And you, the Black Prince, to that swaying crowd
Eclipsed the glory of King Charlemagne
And all his knights, and seemed a new Achilles,
Most chivalrous, most princely among men :
Then when I brought you garlands, then, when love,
Like instant lightning, flashed from you to me,
I did foresee the inevitable end.

EDWARD. No, cease—talk not of that.

MARGARET.

I did foresee

The inevitable end. I knew that summer
Might stay awhile with pomp of bees and roses
And harvest moons ; but there must come a time
When petals fall, when the green woodland dies,
And nothing but bare boughs remain. I fear
No sudden storm, no unexpected whirlwind ;
But the pale progress of decay, the blight
Of autumn ; summer dying, leaf by leaf,
And rose by rose ; the red moon, like a wizard
Luring chill vapours from the leafless woods.
I fear no unforeseen catastrophe,
But the slow dawning of indifference ;
The gradual ebb and listless march of autumn
That surely will invade thy soul—the season
When the fierce passion of thy heart shall wane
As wanes the living fire of summer days
To the pale mockery of winter suns.

EDWARD. Oh cease, oh cease ! I pray you do not utter
These freezing words, for they are blasphemy,
And stab me like a knife. Has the Black Prince
Been ever charged by bitterest enemies
Of being indifferent to friend or foe ?
And how to you, whom I love more than life ?
These words have touched me with an icy chill ;
See, I am trembling like a child ! Oh never
Will our midsummer love know aught of autumn.
And should the heavens prove so pitiless
As to lay hands upon our love, 'twill happen
Thus only : either that I fall in battle,
Or that you meet with an untimely death :
And should you die, I will not tarry long,
But run to meet you, be it in heaven or hell
Or endless night. Because my world is you,

You are my Hell, my Heaven, my Sun, my God,
And there is no existence for my soul
Without you ; neither force, nor space, nor time
In all the universe. My love is wide
As ocean girdling the round world and high
As the dark canopy of topless night ;
So high, so wide.

Look, in the eastern sky
The morning star is waning, and I feel
The dawn afoot upon the whispering sea.
The daylight breaks and I must haste away.
Now let us kiss, and say but once good-bye,
Nor wound our hearts too often with that word
“ Farewell,” that chills me like the hand of Death—
Oh it is more than death to go, but soon
We shall be reunited. In the battle
Thy face shall guide me like a blessed banner ;
Keep thou the thought of me deep in thy heart,
And I shall see thee as thou standest here
Among the orchard blossoms, like the Queen
Of Spring : pale as those petals and more fair.
Farewell, thou blossom of the world, farewell !

MARGARET. I shall behold thee as I see thee now,
As I have always seen thee ; day and night
I shall behold thee, as thou art to-day
And have been always. Thou the very brave,
Peerless and pleasant ; thou the shining pattern
Of chivalry in all the world ! Farewell !

[*Exit* MARGARET.]

Enter CHANDOS.

CHANDOS. Thou art an early riser, I can smell
The Dawn, but cannot see her saffron robe,
And still the moon is bright.

EDWARD. I have not slept
This night : I have no need of any sleep,
Nor could I slumber if I felt the need.

CHANDOS. Is it the coming war that is the cause ?
We have the flower of Europe's chivalry
To fight for us.

EDWARD. I have no thought of that.
O Chandos, I am sick at heart, and fear
Is knocking at my soul. Not that weak fear
Which turns the coward's blood to milk and catches
The craven weakling at the throat ; but dread,
Invisible and vague and veiled dread,
An unsubstantial phantom that pursues me
And throws its shade betwixt me and the sun.

CHANDOS. But what has brought this fear ?

EDWARD. I know not, Chandos.
I am afraid of Time's slow ravages ;
Afraid lest Fate should cheat me of the prize
Which I would win. Conscious of pent-up strength
I fancy sometimes that my life is over,
That all my days will be but a brief dawn
That promised me a noon of gold and glory
Never to shine. For I began life early ;
And when a boy I fought with veterans,
Wining renown ; yet but renown of promise !
But then I thought that manhood once attained,
I should prove worthy of my glorious title,
My royal race, and my own early prowess,
And die at last a not inglorious king.

CHANDOS. That day will surely come, and it will be
A happy day for England.

EDWARD. Haply God
May yet allow me that most royal task.
But I am fearful lest my bright ambition,

Crushed by a sudden turn of Fortune's wheel,
May die before the time of ripeness comes
For grappling with the task.

CHANDOS. Why should such a thing
Befall ? Believe me, these are idle words,
Ill-suited to thy temper.

EDWARD. Nay, I fear
The fullness of my noon may come and go,
And I shall let it slip by unawares ;
And that for me there never will be more
Than a brief dawn and a delaying dusk—
Oh ! not the ample noonday. A brief spring,
And an encroaching autumn of decay.
Never the broad blaze of rich midsummer,
Never the majesty of garnered corn,
Nothing but perished leaves and blood-red suns.

CHANDOS. These are the cobwebs of a tired brain ;
Thou lackest sleep.

EDWARD. We go to fight a battle,
And like as not return as conquerors.
Yes, I am sure we shall be conquerors.
And then all things will be but as before,
And, as before, I shall be lingering here
As idle as a wasp. Day after day
Will slowly pass in empty tournament ;
Night after night in futile feast, and I
No nearer to the goal. Perchance 'tis written
That I shall never reach the goal.

CHANDOS. 'Tis madness
Thou speakest, Prince. These are no fighter's words.

EDWARD. Thy words are just. I can well bide my time.
For I am sure of strong capacity
To wrestle with great issues. I thank God
For my unbounded dream and vast desire,

For lightnings of ambition in my soul. . . .
And yet I fear lest some unseen mischance
Should dash the soaring fabric to the ground,
And curb my else insuperable will
For ever.

CHANDOS. It is not like thee thus to brood
On possible remote calamity ;
It is not like thy frank and fiery spirit
To dwell in sick and vain imaginings—
Thou hast been richly graced by Providence.

EDWARD. Yes, but the ways of Providence are dark,
And the hand of Fate is heavy ; and the wheel
Of fortune, when it turns, does grind to powder ;
For, when Fate strikes, the bravest knight must yield
As quickly as the coward, and surrender,
Nor give a single blow. But hark ! I hear
The trumpet ; it is time that we set forth.

[Sound of trumpets is heard.]

SCENE III

Interior of Astrologer's Tower in the Pyrenees.

ASTROLOGER. The planets speak of an impending task,
A work of bitterness to be fulfilled
Now, in the instant future. Who shall come
To break the undisturbed serenity
Of my long solitude ? The night is quiet,
My sole companions are the wandering stars
Whose silence I can spell. *[Goes to the window.]*

But hark ! I hear
The sound of trumpets in the hollow valley,
And shifting torches flicker in the night.
Again the trumpet calls. It is a camp,

And I can hear the neighing of the horses,
And clank of men in mail. It is an army.
Perchance a battle has been fought, or haply
Is it the eve of battle? Calling echoes
Of horn and clarion wander in the valley;
And many hundred torches twinkle now
Down the dark depths. I hear a step. Perchance
Some wounded man may come to me for aid;
Some shepherd. [*A sound of knocking is heard.*]

Nay, it is the visitant
Of whom the planets spake. Come in and welcome,
In Heaven's name, whoever you may be.

Enter BLACK PRINCE, alone.

ASTROLOGER. Who art thou, stranger? Crav'st thou food
and shelter?

EDWARD. I am a knight, the captain of an army,
And what my name is boots not; from the wars
I have come hither.

ASTROLOGER. Wherefore cam'st thou hither?

EDWARD. My camp is in the valley whence I spied
A light that glimmered from a far-off mountain,
Like a bright beacon; when I spake thereof,
They of the village said a holy sage
Dwelt there, and communed with the silent stars.
They said that he held converse with the dead,
And read the riddle of the skies.

ASTROLOGER. I knew
That thou shouldst come. I read it in the sky.

EDWARD. I crave this boon, that you should lend me
knowledge
To lighten me of my perplexity.

ASTROLOGER. Unfold thy tale and I will then afford
The help I can.

EDWARD. It is a simple tale.
I am a captain, born to lead and rule,
I would that my dominion may be great
And wise and bountiful, as wide it shall be.

ASTROLOGER. Is this the only thought that haunts thy life?

EDWARD. Nay, there is one who in my little world
Shines for me more than sun or moon or star.
One woman, whom devoutly I adore
With ceaseless worship, such as the pure saint
Breathes in his silent cell, and with a might
Of sacrifice as perfect to the end
As that of racked unconquerable martyrs.
My life is lit by two great orbs ; the one
Is thirst for glory, and the second, love.

ASTROLOGER. Where is the canker ?

EDWARD. Lately I have known
The fear of coming doom. This fight is fought,
And I have won another victory ;
But still I am unquiet.

ASTROLOGER. Speak thy fear.

EDWARD. A chilling ague creeps through all my limbs
And lassitude invades me. I had mocked
At this, did not a dream that came to me
Last night, lie heavily upon my soul.
I cannot rede its meaning.

ASTROLOGER. Thou shalt tell
Thy vision.

EDWARD. It was after the great battle
We fought at Navarettè, and I slept.
And to the shadow of my dream, an angel
Came, as the rainbow comes to the grey sea.
He seemed the living spirit of the morning,
Winged with the golden fleeces of the dawn ;

Sandalled with fire, and diademed with dew,
Clothed in the orange ripples of the sunrise
As with a royal robe. A burning torch
He placed within my hands, and guided me
To paths of paradise ; there, while I walked
In bliss, I saw another angel shine.
His face was calm and dazzling as the snow
Upon the mountains, pale as Hesperus
Alone in the sad firmament of May.
He took the living torch from out my hands ;
Then the bright world grew pale and cold with fear ;
I knew that I was face to face with Death.
He led me to a sad triumphant portal
Which opened on a silvery hall of dusk ;
And there I saw the heroes and the kings,
The valiant dead who perished unafraid,
Sleeping beneath a radiant vault of peace,
White as cold marble in the ghostly mist,
Their faces glimmering with unearthly calm.
And those who fell forgotten in the fight,
And those whose names still shine above the world
Like the fixed stars. There in tranquillity
Equal they lie, the heirs of happiness,
Rich in their long inheritance of sleep.
And round the glistening temple I could see
The yawning darkness of a great abyss.
Then as I made to enter, the stern angel
Forbade me, pointing to the world, and I
Followed with lingering steps, and at the margin
Of the abysm craved darkness and access
To that immensity. But once again
The angel turned, and pointed with pale hands
Unto the toiling world. Death who had snatched
The torch of Life from out my hands, denied

Even his utter darkness unto me.
And then methought I woke, with a deep breath,
Attaining the ineffable release.
I said unto my soul : 'Twas but a dream !
Yet daylight came not, and I seemed to linger
Eternities in a cold sunless place.
And all at once, I felt as though a fiend
Were binding me in fetters, and I heard
A noise of rivets hammered into steel.
I strove to move, but I was tightly bound ;
And tentacles unseen dragged me to Hell.
I screamed, and, screaming, found myself awake.

ASTROLOGER. Was that the end ?

EDWARD. Yes ; but I woke in terror,
A stone upon my heart ; and since that hour
I cannot chase the melancholy fit.

ASTROLOGER. Into the holy crystal I will gaze,
Although already I discern some meaning
In this thy dream. *[Fetches crystal.*

O stranger, art thou sure
That thou wouldst peer into the hidden future ?
[Gazes into crystal.

EDWARD. Yes, I am sure. And if untimely death
Be written in the book of Fate, make haste,
Nor hesitate ; for I have faced great peril,
And have looked Death so often in the face,
That I shall neither quiver nor draw back
From the cold touch of his imperious hand.

ASTROLOGER *(slowly turning from the crystal)*. My son,
thou needest all thy courage now.

EDWARD. Then it is worse than death ?

ASTROLOGER. Art thou still sure
That thou wouldst know ?

EDWARD. I pray you, make an end.

ASTROLOGER. Then summon now thy courage, noble child ;

For in the crystal there were piteous sights :
Thou spakest of an ague in thy bones,
And of a certain lassitude. My son,
Thou hast a mortal sickness ; that fell fever
Will never now depart.

EDWARD. Is there no more
Than this, Death's simple sentence ? We must all
Die on a certain day ; much better then
To sink in the full flower and bloom of youth,
As though the new untarnished moon were torn
From the first hour of dusk, and never knew
The fullness and the majesty of midnight,
Leaving on earth remembered witchery,
And unassuaged regret.

*[After a pause, pacing up and down in
rising excitement.]*

Then I die young.

And I shall meet the warriors of the past
Who fell like torches flaring for a moment
In the dark night. And foremost I shall meet
Balder, of whom my old nurse used to croon
A cradle-song ; the great and glorious god ;
The living sun ; the spirit of all youth,
Fated to meet eclipse and suffer darkness.
I shall meet Alexander, that swift soldier,
Blushing with glory like a rose of fire.
Achilles, splendid as a milk-white steed
Decked for the sacrifice ; and I shall hear
Unhappy Roland blow his horn, and see
The lightning in the eyes of saddest Siegfried—
These shall I see, the brave, the fallen stars,
The young whom the gods loved.

ASTROLOGER.

No, Edward, no !

[EDWARD starts.

Not for thee, Edward, Duke of Aquitaine,
And heir of England, Edward the Black Prince ;—
Not such a gift the Fates have stored for thee ;
For thee no boon of swift untimely death
Is kept. Thou shalt live on.

EDWARD.

I cannot trace

Your meaning, gentle sir ; I am in darkness.

ASTROLOGER. My words shall be but few, since I must
stab.

EDWARD (*seating himself*). Nay, tell me ; even to the
bitterest end.

ASTROLOGER. Edward, thou shalt not die, but rather live ;
Yet neither shalt thou reach a mellow age
Of plenitude and ripeness. Pale disease
Shall linger by thy side, and thou shalt know
Eternal autumn to thy day of death.
There shall be battles fought and thou not there ;
Dangers to dare, and thou within the tent,
And foes to face, and thou upon thy couch,
The warhorse idle, and the sword undrawn ;
And from afar the voice of drums and trumpets
Shall call ; but thou shalt not obey the summons.
There shall be thunder of a thousand hoofs
Upon the plain ; and in the woodland aisles
The horn shall echo, and the hounds shall bay ;
Listless, thou wilt not heed : and thou shalt drink
The waters of despondent lassitude,
And taste the ashes of indifference ;
And from Despair thou shalt run out to Death,
But Death will send thee to his child, Despair,
Denying thee his darkness, for a while,
For many weary years, as in thy dream.

And now thou knowest all. Thou hast been brave ;
But there are fairer fields for bravery
Than Poitiers or than Crécy—to live on
With the foreknowledge of the nothingness.
Yet never to succumb unto despair,
To bear in silence the deep wound of Fate.

EDWARD. Is there no more ?

ASTROLOGER. That is the end.

EDWARD.

I thank you—

I thank you for your pains, and say farewell.
The evil is sufficient for to-day.

ACT II

SCENE I

Hall in the Palace. EDWARD and PRINCESS JOAN.

JOAN. My Lord, are you not ready for the feast?
Will you not wear a festal robe?

EDWARD. I doubt
If I shall grace the feast to-day, for I
Am ill disposed, and sick—

JOAN. Oh, pay no heed
To prattle of physicians. You are strong;
This fitful sickness comes but from fatigue,
After the labour of the rough campaign
And hardships of the field.

EDWARD. These noisy feasts
Weary me. I would rather stay away.

JOAN. The Lords will deem it strange that we should
hold
A feast to celebrate thy victory,
Thy glad return, and thou thyself be absent,
Thou, the whole cause, the pillar of the feast.
I pray you, gentle Edward, think thereon.
We have a masque; the ladies of the land
Are coming, dressed in quaint fantastic robes;
Myself I have a new and glittering robe,
All white and downy with soft plumes; my damsel,
When I did wear it, with a small gold crown
Set in my hair, said that from faëry lands

I seemed to come—a Queen, who by some magic
Is changed into a white and splendid peacock ;
So long, so soft, so feathery my train,
So white and proud my neck, the damsel said.

EDWARD. I cannot come to-day, and there's an end.

JOAN. Most humbly, I beseech you and entreat—
Be not so hasty and so ill-advised :
Would you then hear the nodding courtiers say,
When I shall enter in my robe of State,
Radiant and shimmering in my snowy plumage,
I, the fair maid of Kent, the peerless rose,
Blushing and fresh among these sultry beauties :
Would you then hear them say, “ She comes alone,
Her husband has not any words for her
Nor eyes for her bright beauty ” ? Think of the Court ;
The task of Princes never passed for pleasant.

EDWARD. Am I not lord and master of my goings?
Must I submit to woman's idle talk
And childish fantasies? I cannot come.

JOAN. If you will have it so, my Lord, farewell,
I go to make me ready for the feast.

EDWARD. Sweet Joan, forgive the roughness of my speech;
Believe me, I am not in tune for feasts;
I pray thee, Joan, do not entreat me more. *[Exit] JOAN.*

Enter CHANDOS.

EDWARD. Chandos at last ! Quick, tell me all your news. Did you find Margaret, and give my message ?

CHANDOS. Yes, she was sitting by a stately loom,
Like Circe, weaving subtle tapestries
In the cool shadow of her cypress grove,
And singing a soft ditty while she worked.

EDWARD. What did she say ?

CHANDOS.

She cometh to the feast

Arrayed in all the pearls you gave to her ;
She counts the minutes, and can scarcely weave
For very fever of anxiety,
And longing after you ; her face is pale
From waiting and from watching. When we rode
In triumph through the streets, she from a window
Watched us, and threw red roses on our path :
She says you did not see her, and she frets.

EDWARD. The sun, the crowd, the shouting dazzled me :
I could see nothing. Looks she just the same ?

CHANDOS. She is as peerless as the sea-born goddess ;
The fire of summer leaps within her veins,
And summer night is brooding in her eyes.

EDWARD. Had she no other words ?

CHANDOS. Oh, Sir, have patience,
And I will tell you all. After the feast
And pageantry is ended, you shall meet her
In the accustomed place, hard by the sea.

EDWARD. I would the feast were done ! Oh, weary time
Before I see her face !

CHANDOS. How fares it with you
To-day, my Lord ; do you still feel fatigue ?

EDWARD. Chandos, 'tis no fatigue that wearies me ;—
I have a deadly serpent at my heart
That gnaws my very life. At Roncesvalles
While we were camped there, all alone I sought
A holy hermit, skilled in the signs of Heaven—
But to no mortal man have I confessed this,
And telling you I speak to a sealed tomb—
This sage foretold me of much bitterness
Which in the future I should undergo ;
That I should never be a knight again,
But waste away in slow and lagging sickness
Until the end.

CHANDOS. Oh, Sir, you tell me not
That you do heed such talk of knaves who trade
On credulous fools ?

EDWARD. Haply, he spake true things ;
For I myself have had a like foreboding ;—
And yet I dream that I have much to live for :
Whether I come to be a glorious monarch,
Or pine here in Bordeaux. Since our return
To-day, the thought of Margaret has stilled
Such sad forebodings, and uneasy dreams.
The thought that I shall swiftly see her face
Has put to flight these sickly fantasies.
How can I wait until the sunset, say ?

Enter LITTLE EDWARD.

LITTLE EDWARD. My mother sends me, and she bids me
tell you
The banquet will be ready in an hour,
And begs you to get ready, father ; come.

EDWARD. 'Tis well, say that I come.

LITTLE EDWARD. And I forgot
To tell you there are some white strawberries,
Such as you like—Nurse took me to the forest—
And I myself did pick them for the banquet ;
We started before sunrise, to be sure
Of finding them ; for children of the town
Pick all before we have the chance to seek.
And, father, in the tournament to-morrow,
Will you ride the grey charger, whom we christened
Poitiers ?

EDWARD. My little son, I shall not ride
To-morrow in the tourney : you shall stay
By me, and watch me give the laurel crown.

LITTLE EDWARD. Will you not ride ? It would be the first time

That you among the women-folk looked on.

EDWARD. Away : and tell your mother that I come.

LITTLE EDWARD. But father——

EDWARD. Run : did you not hear me speak ?

SCENE II

The same hall in the Palace. Minstrels are playing in gallery.

PRINCE and PRINCESS are seated on two thrones. COURTIERs, KNIGHTs, LADIES, etc. Dance and music.

MARGARET. The Prince looks pale ; this Spanish War has tired him.

Doubtless the hardship and the toil was great.

CHANDOS. Yes : and the Prince did take the roughest share

Of labour, with the meanest of his soldiers.

MARGARET. Did you deliver him my message ?

CHANDOS.

Yes ;

At sunset he will meet you by the sea,

As soon as the festivity is ended.

MASQUE

Enter PARIS and HELEN of Troy.

PARIS. Ten years the fight has lasted, ten long years ;
The Greeks have known alternate hopes and fears,
But thou art fairer than thou wert, that day
When from the shores of Greece we sailed away ;
Thou art as perfect as a drop of dew
Reflecting the round rainbow's every hue ;

Thou art as radiant as the lonely gem
Set in the twilight's dusky diadem.
The gods to mould thy matchless shoulders chose
From highest mountains the divinest snows.
Of lilies of the vale they wove thy skin
And carved thy faultless teeth in jessamine,
With sapphires and the sea and twilight skies
And the drowned moon they made thy dreaming eyes.
And the gold river of thy hair was spun
With the hot beams of the triumphant sun.
So that thy mouth they might incarnadine,
They melted rubies from an Indian mine ;
And all the roses of the world were crushed
Before thy snowy cheek had faintly blushed ;
Of ivory and pearls they built thy throat
And gave thy voice the dawn's mysterious note.
Beauty for all things, Helen, must atone,
For the gods took to make thy heart, a stone.

As the slow cadence of the violin
Draws from the hard and hollow wood its spell,
So dost thou quiver like a beaten bell
And hard as crystal is thy heart within.
Round thee like incense mounts the prayer, the praise.
Men give their lives, the love of all their days.
Passing, as though thou heededst not nor knew,
Thou in return dost give thy summer mirth ;
Jove sent thee like a rainbow to the earth :
A cloud of phantom fire and frozen dew.

Enter ACHILLES.

ACHILLES. False Paris, dost thou dare to show thy
face ?
Emblem of falsehood, craftsman of disgrace ;

Soon will the gods deliver us the town,
And we shall burn each towering temple down.
Hecuba humbled in the dust shall kneel
And Hector shall be crushed beneath my heel.

PARIS. Cease thy proud taunt and bragging insolence !
Thou too shalt meet with righteous recompense.
See, here is Death, who comes to tell thy fate.

Enter DEATH.

DEATH. Achilles, dipped in the dark stream of hate,
Pleasant and lovely knight, the young, the brave.
Make ready for the shadow of the grave !
Courage and youth avail thee nothing now,
The Fates have set their seal upon thy brow,
For carelessly they fix their dreadful seal,
And to the Fates in vain thou shalt appeal.
Those whom the gods love meet an early death—
Untimely the bright hero perisheth ;
Allows his shining sword and shield to rust,
And leaves sweet air for darkness and the dust.
Yet, 'tis a better thing to meet the doom
In the first hour of youth's unsullied bloom
Than taste the dismal autumn's discontent,
Weary, remorseful, and indifferent.

EDWARD (*rising suddenly in a passion*). Cease, cease the
Masque : this sugared chanting tires us.
Have done, depart ; we fain would dance a measure—
Minstrels, strike up a merry roundelay—
Come, noble friends, and join the dance with me.

MARGARET (*to CHANDOS*). What ails the Prince ? and
why this sudden wrath ?

CHANDOS. Methinks 'tis sickness ; mark how pale he is.
[*Music ceases, MASQUERS run out frightened.* PRINCE
leads PRINCESS down and joins a dance.

The Black Prince

SCENE III

*By the seashore.*MARGARET, *alone, sings—*

*The roses in my garden
Were white in the noonday sun,
But they were dyed with crimson
Before the day was done.*

*All clad in golden armour
To fight the Saladin,
He left me in my garden
To weep, to sing and spin.*

*When fell the dewy twilight
I heard the wicket grate,
There came a ghost who shivered
Beside my garden gate.*

*All clad in golden armour,
But dabbled with red dew ;
He did not lift his visor,
And yet the face I knew.*

*And when he left my garden
The roses all were red
And dyed in a fresh crimson ;
Only my heart was dead.*

*The roses in my garden
Were white in the noonday sun ;
But they were dyed with crimson
Before the day was done.*

MARGARET. The sunset tarries ; will it never come ?
I know not why I sing so sad a song—
My songs are sadder than I am to-day ;
For gracious have the gods been unto me,
And sent my warrior home,—and I am grateful.
See, here he comes. How often in my mind
I have called up this meeting and rehearsed
The ecstasy ; and now the hour is come
It will be different and more divine
Than as I pictured.

Enter EDWARD.

EDWARD. Margaret, my life ! [*Embraces her.*]

MARGARET. I cannot speak for very joy, and mute
I can but gaze and gaze ; and to myself
Repeat that you are here, perpetually,
Over and over again that you are here.
Could you not seek me in my house this morning ?
I waited for you in the cypress grove.
My Lord, while you were fighting far away,
I worked you an embroidered sable doublet,
Adorned with sea-blue sapphires, to be worn
At festivals and feasts. Oh, when you rode
Into the town this morning, I was there,
Leaning out from a storied parapet,
Strewing your way with flowers ; you did not see—
You did not once look up into my casement.
I thought you must discern my hungry eyes
Among a million faces. Wherefore, Love,
Did you not look ? Did not you surely know
That if a crowd had come to welcome you,
I must be somewhere in that crowd—the soul,
The star, the pulse of the vast multitude ?
And yet your eyes forgot to seek my face

EDWARD. The sun, the crowd, the shouting dazzled me.
I could see nothing.

MARGARET. Then I went straight home,
And spent an hour before the polished glass,
Tiring my hair according to your fancy,
And donning the apparel you love best ;
My robe of silver tissue wrought with pearls,
With the green train that hangs high from my shoulder
Pale as the Lily of the Valley's leaf,
And broidered with Annunciation Lilies
According to your wish ; and for a girdle,
The rubies that you gave me, red as blood,
As fiery as my love, and hard and firm
And true as is my constant faith to you :
Why did you leave me lonely ? There I waited
The endless morning ; until Chandos came
And bade me to the feast. I had no heart
To come in the apparel I had donned
But for your private eyes, and so I doffed it,—
And dressed myself like a sad sorceress
In sea-green silken fabric wrought with moons,
As you did see me there.

EDWARD. Dear, you know well—
Had I been able, I had quickly come.
The nobles and the prelates sought my counsel
With State affairs. My wife awaited me,
And my son Edward ; then I sent you Chandos,
So that you should not fret yourself, nor wait
In vain for me.

MARGARET. And why did you break off
The classic Masque with such a gust of passion ?

EDWARD. I was aweared of the tedious feast
And longed to meet thee. Therefore I broke off
The Masque.

MARGARET. You should have rather stopped the dance,
Instead of frightening thus the harmless players.

I have not seen you angry thus before

For such a little thing. What was the cause?—

I think there is a cause you keep from me.

EDWARD. Naught but impatience to behold your face.

MARGARET. If you had been so fretful and impatient
To see my face, why came you not this morning
When I was waiting hungry for your kiss?

EDWARD. I have already said I could not come.

MARGARET. There is some secret thing that you conceal ;

Your face to me is as a glassy pool ;

Tell me then, is there aught that troubles you ?

Confess, and I will shrive you.

EDWARD. There is nothing.

MARGARET. I see the truth : Oh that it should be
so !

The haunting omens that I had forgotten,
That had quite melted like an ugly dream
Before the splendid morn ; my prophecy
Was true. you do not love me any more !
That is the reason why you did not come
To-day ; the reason of the sudden outburst
When the poor masquer spoke of wither'd love,
And youth outliving the first fire of passion,
And wasting in indifference. I see,
I understand ; my fearful heart was true ;
O misery ! that it should come so soon !
The summer has departed from the world !

EDWARD. Margaret, I have trusted in your sense
Till now, and never known you blown about
By whims, as lesser women ; therefore, heed me,
Hear and believe me ; I will drown these doubts.

But, Margaret, why waste the precious time ?
Come, let me wipe away these foolish tears
In the strong certainty of my embrace.

MARGARET. You madden me. Oh, you must surely see
I know the truth, that protest is in vain.
It is in vain ; not all the eloquence
Of words and vows will raze the certainty
From my fixed mind. I know you far too well.
If it were only true you were unchanged,
I should not need a single syllable
To strengthen my calm faith. Not silver tongues,
Nor all the honied arts of sweet persuasion
Will now convince me that you are the same.
I have been blind. I was so mad with bliss,
That power of sight and reasonable thought
Were taken from me. Now, I see more clear ;
I see it in the cloud upon that brow,
I see it in those listless hands, and most
I see it in those lustreless vague eyes,
Where passion used to swim like a veiled sun.
Fool that I was not instantly to know !

EDWARD. Come, let me chase this madness with a kiss.

MARGARET. It is not madness, but the bitter truth.

EDWARD. Let us not waste the fleeting time in quarrel.
If you persist in this mad fantasy,
I will await your saner mind, to-morrow.

MARGARET. To-morrow ! My to-morrows are all dead !
While you were absent, every night I dreamed
I heard you knocking at my garden gate,
And ran to meet you. And, as I woke, I said,
Although he is not come, he loves me still.
To think that I shall wake to-morrow morn,
And say, " He whom I waited for so long
Is here, but he no longer loves me now."

To think that now, when you are come, it is
The same as when you were so far away ;
That you are now a shadow, and our love
The memory of a music that is mute—
With me the memory shall live like fire,
And it will eat my heart, until I die.
For I shall die. I am not brave enough
To look on you and say, " There was a time
When the Black Prince had but one thought in life,
And that one only thought was Margaret."
Is some unhappy doom awaiting you ?
Must you to England ? Is your father sick ?
Or must there be an everlasting parting ?
Has your wife railed against me ? Do the nobles
Say you must leave me ? Yet eternal parting
Were better than the causeless death of love
I fear. Oh speak, oh speak the truth to me !

EDWARD. Unless you curb this folly, I must go.

[Walks impatiently away.]

MARGARET. Then it is true you love me now no more ;
Then it is true that all that love is dead !
Oh, you are cruel. Go, for I can but hate you ;
Your love was but a game, a mockery,
And you did never love me in the past.
You knew that I was fair, and it was pleasant
To hear the people murmur when I passed,
" That woman who is radiant like the dawn,
She is the mistress of our Prince." I thought
That you were fashioned of a greater mould
Than that which goes to shape the common man.
You are the same as all the rest, no, worse ;
A braggart, one, who though a prince, will boast
To dazzle foolish men.

EDWARD.

I go. Farewell.

Haply to-morrow I shall find you sane.

Farewell.

[*Goes.*

MARGARET (*running after him*). No, Edward, no, come back! Forgive

[*Drags herself at his knees.*

My fiery words. My reason is distraught,
With endless and intolerable waiting
And every day's suspense. When you came back,
The shock of rapture was too great for me.
I knew not what I said; and, more than mad,
I gibbered like a spectre. I unsay
All that I said; I call back every word;
Only forgive. It was a sorry thing,
To speak the things I spoke. See, here I kneel,
I drag myself imploring at thy feet,
I grovel in the dust; only forgive me,
My merciful great king, forgive, forgive.

EDWARD. There is no cause for kneeling or for prayer,
There is no need to pray for my forgiveness,
For there is nothing to forgive. I said
That the long waiting had distraught thy soul.
Now we will talk no more of sorry things.
Look up, the glory of the sky does chide us,
For it is all suffused with glowing love.

MARGARET. O noble heart, too great and generous
Edward,

I would that I had bitten out my tongue.
Forgive me, I cannot forgive myself.

EDWARD. A thousand roses in delicious death
Fade in the sky; and their mute requiem
Has soothed the ocean with a wondrous peace.

MARGARET. What have I done, my king, what have I
done?

You are too great and too magnanimous,
And I the darkest blot upon the world.

EDWARD. There is no wrinkle on the glassy sea
That glitters like a mirror ; the far cliffs
Seem thin as a transparent haze, and purple
As the dark violet. See ! one white sail
Is fading in the crimson of the West.
I wonder who is sailing on that ship ?
It makes me sad to see ships disappear
Beneath the rim of ocean ; for I know
What I should feel in watching such a ship
If it bore one I loved. Supposing I
Watched such a ship and knew you were on board—

MARGARET. Great heart : you have forgiven me ; but I
Can give no pardon to my wretched soul !

EDWARD. Now it has sunk beneath the sea, the sun
Has touched the cooling water ; the gold fire,
Blent with the liquid azure, makes a green
More soft than a magician's emerald ;
Now the high clouds catch fire at the reflection
Of the fast sinking orb ; see ! one by one
They come to life and shine. And now the sun
Has disappeared, and the whole sky is dyed
With deeper hues ; a little whispering breeze
Has crept upon the waters, and they ripple.
How beautiful these pools are in the sand,
Reflecting the red sky. I fain would see
Thy face in such a pool,—how great the magic,
The spell of that reflected face would be.

MARGARET. Yes, like an image in a holy crystal.

EDWARD. Talk not of holy crystals. I abhor
The necromancer's art ; they are all knaves,
Who lure us to despair with cheating omens
And lying signs.

MARGARET. Where have you seen such men ?

EDWARD. Nowhere ; but it is so. See now the cliffs

Are grey, and the stirred waves are shivering ;
The sky is like a sea of amethyst,
The stars creep out, a spirit seems to breathe
In the pale circle of the pearly moon.
Twilight has fallen ; let us go away.

SCENE IV

*In a church. Dawn. EDWARD is kneeling before the altar
in the Lady Chapel.*

EDWARD. Here will I stay awhile and think ; my brain
Is whirling, and I dare not say a prayer.
She thinks I love her still, and yet I feel
No love for her ; my passion is pretence,
And each wild kiss is but a mocking lie ;
She is now but the shadow of a dream,
An echo from the grave to my cold heart.

Here in the darkness let me say my prayer. [Kneels.
O Mary, Mother, in whose care my soul
Is like an unfledged bird ; and thou, St. Michael,
Who kindled my desire for fame ; and thou,
St. George, who made me strong and fought for me
At Poitiers and at Crécy, and who taught me
How to be gentle, intercede for me.
I have not any longer thirst for glory—
No more desire, no courage, and no strength.
I have forgotten my felicity.
My soul is listless and my heart is dead.
O Mary, Mother, who didst make my heart
Deep as the sea, and tender as the rose,
And clinging as the creeper, love's sweet word
No more has meaning to my careless ear.
The prescience of a doom has taken away

The wish to live ; oh, touch my perished heart
And it shall leap once more with the glad morning—
My soul shall melt once more at the rich sight
Of sunset and of twilight ; let my body
Tingle once more when the loud trumpet calls
And the horn wakes the woodland.

[*Pause.*

It is vain,
It is in vain. My prayer is all in vain,
I cannot pray, I am too sad. O God !
What have I done to meet with such a doom ?
Help me, St. George, my Captain, stir my pulse ;
But for one instant water my dried heart,
One moment only—gladly will I die
After that moment ; let me feel once more
My heart is something else than a dead ember
Which once was glowing fire. After to-day
I cannot walk into the staring world,
Like a paid mummer acting a false part,
The semblance of a prince. St. Michael, thou
Didst make me true ; how shall I then play false
To the whole world ? O Christ, be merciful !
Afflict me with extremest racking tortures,
With anguish and disgrace and utter ruin,
With penury and shame ; let me be conquered,—
I, the unconquered,—captured, bound in chains,
Lashed to the chariot of my enemy ;—
But give me back, dear Lord, my heart again.
O Mary, Mother, whose most precious heart
Was wounded seven times, oh, wound mine too
With one such wound, with but one little wound.
Only my heart is broken, not my soul—
My high, impregnable soul—and not my will
That never has been taught to bend or yield.
Yet if it be Thy will, O Christ, my Captain,

[*Pause.*

I will drink of Thy cup unto the lees ;
Nor utter one complaint, yet, Mary, Mother,
Ask of thy Son to give me back my heart.
For I am like a censer made to swing
Unceasingly, and breathe a cloud of incense
Fragrant and warm ; and if the living coal
Be deadened, there is no more use for me.
O Mary, Mother, help me in distress,
And intercede for me before God's Throne.

[Bells ring.]

ACT III

SCENE I

Margaret's garden. Evening. MARGARET and MARY.

[*BLOIS is heard singing outside.*]

MARGARET. The afterglow of sunset fades away,
The twilight falls, and I am still alone :
Since noonday have I waited, richly clothed
In such apparel as my lord loves best,
And yet he tarries.

MARY. Not for many a month
Hast thou been thus adorned ; not since the day
The Prince returned to Bordeaux from the war.
My Lady has put on the selfsame raiment
She wore that day ; that which she doffed again
Before the palace feast.

MARGARET. I mind it well ;
But I have donned my fairest robes in vain
Since the Prince comes not ;—and he will not come.
He said, I will be with you at the noon.
When noonday shone I waited still in vain.
At last at set of sun, I sent my page,
Some moments past, to seek the Prince. Alas !
Alas ! I fear his quest is all in vain.
In truth, he has no answer for my page.
'Tis strange ; and yet it is not strange at all,
For the Black Prince loves me no longer now.

MARY. Have you yet tried what jealousy can do
To spur his halting love ?

MARGARET. Yes, I have tried.
I have made false pretence of love with Blois,
That Gascon lord, who every evening sings
A serenade beneath my garden wall.
He sings to-night. But Edward knows full well
My love is not a love that shifts and wanes.

MARY. Art thou so sure that he no longer loves you ?

MARGARET. I bear at heart the deadly certainty ;
There is some secret thing he hides from me ;
And if I tax him with his heavy mood,
He prates of his strange sickness ; yet I know
If somewhat had not made a mist between us,
He would have loved me even unto death.
Once my proud nature rose and leapt to him,
As the wild ocean rises to the moon ;
And as the moon shines down upon the sea,
He smiled upon my silent tide of love.
Now both of us but play a piteous part,
Feigning the shadow of a perished passion,
For when I saw he loved me not, my heart
Broke with one pang. But now his listlessness
Has brought me to despair. My heart is weary,
My life is withered. I would fain forget.

MARY. Then let another love thee ; thou art young.

MARGARET. Thou dost not understand. I was once loved
By the Black Prince. I cannot be content
To be the mistress of a meaner man.
And yet so wild, so mad is my despair,
That I could plunge into a gulf of crime,
And dare the worst to drown my misery.

Enter CHANDOS.

CHANDOS. The Prince has sent me ; he will come anon.
He marvels that you fret.

MARGARET. Oh, miracle
That I should fret ! Here since the stroke of noon
Have I awaited him.

CHANDOS. What if the Prince
Has other cares, and larger cares, perchance ?

MARGARET. I was once not the least among his cares.
Speak plain, I pray you. You have come to say
That the Black Prince loves me no longer now.

CHANDOS. With other eyes I do regard the Prince ;
To me, and to the men who fought with him
At Crécy, Poitiers, and at Navarette,
He is much more than man. In the gold past,
No hero brighter shines, and in the future
There never will be such a Prince again.
And now great sorrows visit him, disease
Lies heavily upon him ; troubles gather ;
The whole horizon looms before him black.
You choose this time to come to him with sighs,
And whining whims and fretful fantasies.
Believe me, this is not the time or season.
His days of love are over.

MARGARET. Chandos, cease !
Enough, enough, I will not hear such speech.
Begone, I say. I will not see you more.

CHANDOS. You rail, because you know it is the truth.

[*Exit.*

[*BLOIS is heard singing outside.*

MARGARET. It is the Lord of Blois, go bid him enter,
And bring my ruby girdle ; I will set
A coronal of rubies in my hair ;
That time I wore a garland of red roses ;
And now there are no roses ; but the stones
Are harder, and do make a braver show.
Should the Prince come, say that I am not here.

Bid him await me in the lower chamber,
And tell him that I shall not tarry long.
Throw open, too, the casement on the lawn.
It is a mild and balmy April evening,
Like that on which the Prince set out to war.
And bring no torches, for he loves to see
The swallows circling in the green half-light,
Dark, dark against the sky. Good-night to you.

[*Exit* MARY.

[BLOIS *again heard singing.*

[*Enter* MARY, with girdle and coronal. *Exit* through garden.

MARGARET. Should Edward come, why, Blois and I will talk,

While the Prince lists. Perchance 'twill touch his heart
To see another king where he was king,
Here in the kingdom of his cypress grove.

[*Enter* BLOIS (*through garden*).

Tread softly, pray come hither, gentle lord.

[*Goes to meet him : they walk in silence past window.*

Enter EDWARD (*at window*).

MARGARET. Escape through the small gate, it is the Prince
Who, should he find thee here, would surely slay thee.

[*Exit* BLOIS.

[EDWARD *comes out.*

'Tis you : in very truth I had forgotten
That you should come this evening.

EDWARD.

It is true ;

And haply it is true you lacked not solace
To make up for my absence.

MARGARET.

Were you listening ?

I see the casement open. Yes, a friend

Was here. He comes to cheer my solitude
When I am left alone : a gentle knight,
Impetuous as the ocean's racing tide,
And fiery as an untamed steed.

EDWARD. His name ?

MARGARET. Why, it is Guy de Blois ; you know him well.
He won the prize at the last tournament.
You must have often seen me talk to him.

EDWARD. Tell me it is a jest ; I will forgive you ;
And we will laugh together at the sport.

MARGARET. There is no jest. The Lord of Blois does
love me.
And that is all.

EDWARD. O Margaret, take heed ;
For I am perilous when roused to anger.

MARGARET. What is there that can rouse thee ? Is it
strange
That Guy de Blois should love me, and that I
Should give him back his love ? You loved me once,
'Tis true ; but that, my friend, was long ago.
And I, I loved you too, how long ago !
But women cannot be for ever constant
To men who have proved fickle.

EDWARD. Margaret,
Have pity on me : speak a pitying word ;
Dispel this ugly shade.

MARGARET. It is no shadow :
It is the simple truth ; did you not know
That I loved Guy ? It is the common talk
Of the whole town. 'Tis true that in these days,
You have been buried in secluded quiet.

EDWARD. Oh, say another word and I shall kill you !

MARGARET. I am quite ready ; nay, I can but think
That I shall make a goodly sacrifice,

Dressed as I am in palest green and silver,
The lily's colours ; 'tis the dress you loved,
And now he loves it too. How quickly Time
Goes round ! how swift and sudden are his changes !

EDWARD. I cannot lend my credence to this tale.

MARGARET. You falter like a child. Be honest, Edward ;
Let us be honest, both ; you have repute
For honesty. You loved me once most dearly :
I gave you back your love tenfold renewed :
And then there came a season, when the flame
Flickered a fleeting moment, and went out.
When we shall stand before God's judgment-seat,
The record of my suffering at that moment
It may be you shall hear. I think that God
Will deem it weighs the balance of much sin.
But when the first pang of the wound subsided
Which slew my heart, I own the torn flesh healed ;
The blood was staunched, leaving a shrivelled heart :
And I became listless as you to-day,
And as indifferent ; until one day
I saw young Guy de Blois ride in the lists,
And then, as once before, like instant lightning,
Flashed love from him to me. You know the truth,
The naked truth.

EDWARD. It cannot be the truth.
You do not love another : not this Blois
Or any knight. I will not yet believe it.
You say this but to anger me, or rouse
My jealousy. It cannot be the truth ;
I beg you to make mock of me no more.

MARGARET. It is no mockery ; the very truth.
Can you not understand a woman's heart
Is made of rarer stuff than simple wax,
To bend in any shape a man shall choose ?

Love is a jealous god, and is not mocked.
His heart is proud, and full of fire divine ;
His majesty may not be many times
Slighted and set at naught, as you have done ;
Can you not hear the funeral dirge of love ?
Since you came back it were in vain to count
How often we have parted in hot anger,
And afterwards been reconciled. The day
You came back from the war the rift was made,
Since then, we scarce have met but we have quarrelled,
And afterwards been reconciled once more.

EDWARD. It is the common course of all true love,
To quarrel and be reconciled again.

MARGARET. But what has kindled all this quarrelling ?
Only that now you love me no more, no more—
That you no longer love me. The months passed,
The long and dreary winters came and went,
And my poor heart which broke, how long ago,
When first I saw the end of all your love,
At last rebelled, and sought and found its solace.

EDWARD. One last time, Margaret, say that it is
false,
As it is false that I no longer love you.

MARGARET. I love another man, Guy and no other ;
As much as in the past I once loved you.

EDWARD. O God ! to think that Thou couldst make a
being
So fair to look on, with a heart so black,
And with a soul thus full of deadly venom.
I will speak briefly ; you are still my fief.
You shall not look on Guy de Blois again ;
And if he cross the threshold of this house,
He shall be slain beneath your storied casement ;
And for the present you shall not depart

From these four walls, but wait my further pleasure.

MARGARET. I shall see Blois so often as I please ;
And there are many spots besides this house
Where we can meet. I fear no threatening talk.
O Sir, you know me better than to think
I am afeared of threats.

EDWARD. O Margaret,
Say it is but a hideous dream, and say
That you still love me ; and if all were true,
I would forgive you all ; I would forgive
You anything. Say that it is not true !

MARGARET. It is the truth ; the very heart of truth.

EDWARD. Then I'll not speak, but carry out my threats ;
And you shall be imprisoned in this house.
A guard shall watch it ; and your Guy de Blois
Shall be removed for ever from your sight.
I care not if he dies.

MARGARET. You do not care ;
That is the secret of your whole life now.

EDWARD. Drive me not, Margaret, to the last despair.

MARGARET. Slay me, and quick ; but listen and hear
clearly.

For I am mistress of my ways and goings ;
My will is fixed to love whom I shall choose.
And now to put an end to this vain strife,
I shall leave France for ever, so good-bye.

EDWARD. Merciful Lord ! That Thou hast made this
creature !

One last time, Margaret, I do implore you
To say it has been but to prove my passion.

MARGARET. I wish you a good-night and last farewell.

[*Exit* EDWARD.]

MARGARET. He cares ; he feels ; he lives once more—
Ah no !

For deep within his heart he cares no more ;
He suffers ; but his sorrow is the pang
Of jealousy and pride, a dying flicker ;
But deep down in his heart there is no flame,
Only the ashes of indifference.

SCENE II

Hall in Palace. PRINCESS JOAN and NURSE.

JOAN. Where is the Prince ?

NURSE. Lying upon a couch
In his bedchamber, and I think he sleeps.
He has been sore oppressed these last two days,
And sad in humour.

JOAN. Would we could devise
Something to strike his fancy and distract him
From brooding.

NURSE. But the skilled physicians say
No malady afflicts him, save the ghost
Of fever that he caught in the far country,
Which needs must sometimes visit him.

JOAN. Yet naught
Seems to delight him now.

NURSE. Oh, it is bitter !
That he should brood with this vain malady
Casts a sad shadow on our gallant Court.
Would you not fain devise some interlude
To cheer the greyness ?

JOAN. I had hither bade
Some Gascon barons, skilled in falconry.
But now that Queen Philippa has just died,
We cannot decently hold festival,
Nor may I strive to chase away the shadow
That darkens the old brightness of Bordeaux.

Enter EDWARD (pale). Sits down.

EDWARD. What time is it ? I have been in my chamber. I think I slept ; but where is John of Chandos ?

NURSE. My Lord of Chandos is not yet returned. He went upon your errand. Will you see Your little son ? He begs to come to you.

EDWARD. Not now, not yet ; I first must talk to Chandos : It is a pressing matter ; presently Edward shall come.

JOAN. Can I do aught for you ?

EDWARD. No, Joan, it is a matter but for Chandos.

[Exit JOAN.]

NURSE. My child, my child. I know thy grief, I come To comfort thee with my poor withered hands.

EDWARD. Nurse, I am weary, and I fain would sleep, And never see the dawn again ; for Heaven Has no more care for me upon the earth. Must Heaven too choose this season of despair, When I am weak and have no strength to struggle, Now when each day is darkened by defeat, When every hour they bring me bitter news Of cities taken by the enemy, Of friends and captains whom I loved and trusted Slain on the field or yielding to the foe ;— Why must God choose this dark and dreadful date To take away what in this sorry world Can least and never be replaced, my mother ? My mother, whom through these long fruitless years That I have held the mockery of Court, I have not seen. Nurse, during these last months My hidden thought has been of home and England. I used to picture the delirious moment When at the last I should indeed come home.

And often when some little thing had happened,
I thought, "This will I keep for her, this tell,
This little joy, for she will surely smile,
This care, this grief, for she will understand."
And as each month slipped past I thought the length
Of my long exile and our separation
Would add unto the perfect joy of meeting,
And make the happiness more keen; thus rather
Did I prolong the absence and delay,
Tasting each day anticipated joy.
Now she is gone; and I was not allowed
Even to say good-bye to her, nor gain
One glimpse of her; nor yet to touch her hand.
I would have given all to touch her hand,
And in that silent pressure speak at last
The love, which was too great for any words.
Therefore, Nurse, would I now fain fall asleep
And wake, if wake I shall, to see her face.
For I am very weary, having lost
Too much this year on either side the sea.

Enter CHANDOS.

CHANDOS. You summoned me, my Lord, and I have come.

[*Exit* NURSE.]

EDWARD. What news, what news? didst thou obtain an audience?

CHANDOS. Yes, but 'twas brief; she swears she will depart

For ever from Bordeaux, at set of sun
This very day. She bade me bring to you
This ring, on which there shines a single ruby,
And a small scroll of parchment tied with silk.

EDWARD. It is the first gift which I gave to her.
Give me the parchment—there is something writ—

My eyes are heavy, I pray you read it me.

CHANDOS (*reads*).

*"To hide my sorrow's secret smart,
I often laugh till it breaks my heart.
When love is dead and despair has come,
It is best for lips to be sealed and dumb.
When Love is dead, and Death is nigh,
'Tis best to stifle memory.
Nothing can quicken the withered flower,
Never returns the once vanished hour.
My heart is dead and my tears are dry,
'Tis best to stifle memory."*

Below there is a line but faintly scrawled—

*"At sunset I embark upon the sea.
Farewell, you loved me once——"*

EDWARD. O Chandos, were you kind, you would draw forth

Your sword and plunge it in my heart and slay
The snake that dwells there, feeding. Was that all ?

CHANDOS. Yes, gentle Lord ; those were her only words.

EDWARD. What did she when you saw her ?

CHANDOS. She stood and gazed
Out at the rippling sea from her high casement ;
Her eyes looked wistfully ; her cheek was pale.
She smiled upon me when she saw me come ;
Her smile was like the sunlight on the leaves
After long rains—a most divine soft smile,
And yet I think that she is very sad ;
I do not think she goes.

EDWARD. I cannot think
That she will truly go, and leave me here
Perchance to die alone, without a word.

Enter LITTLE EDWARD.

LITTLE EDWARD. How do you feel to-day, sweet father ?
Better ?

It is a bright and sunny morn, the woods
Are paved with violets and slender wind-flowers,
And I have found wild tulips too : see here,
I bring you flowers ; but they do not smell
Save of the freshness of the earth. It rained
Last evening, and the grass is wet and fragrant.

EDWARD. Thank you, my little son.

LITTLE EDWARD. O father, tell me,
When you are King of England—for Nurse says
You will be King of England—will my name
Be the Black Prince, and shall I have a suit
Of splendid coal-black armour like the one
You used to wear at tourneys ? it is long
Since you rode in the lists. When you are well
You must begin to ride. If I were King
I should have tourneys every day. Please promise
That we shall ride as soon as you are well.

EDWARD. I promise, little son, when I am well.
Go and play gently while I slumber here.

[LITTLE EDWARD *runs on the balcony overlooking the sea. Pause of a moment.*

LITTLE EDWARD. O father ! quickly come ; a gallant ship,
Glittering and white, is sailing past our window.

EDWARD (*rushing to the window*). Chandos, take thou the
child and leave me here,
For in this hour I must be left alone.

[*He stands gazing out of the window.*
Too late, too late ! And she is gone away.
I was too late. Oh, never did I dream
That she could leave me thus : she said “ At sunset.”

The street as it chanced was for the moment empty. Edgar crossed the street and rapped quickly with certain pauses between the raps on the door of that deserted house into which Gaydon had watched men enter. The door was opened. 'Follow me,' said Edgar. Gaydon followed him into a bare passage unswept and with discoloured walls. A man in a little hutch in the wall opened and closed the door with a string.

Edgar walked forward to the end of the passage with Gaydon at his heels. The two men came to a flight of stone steps which they descended. The steps led to a dark and dripping cellar with no pavement but the mud, and that depressed into puddles. The air was cold and noisome, the walls to the touch of Gaydon's hand were greasy with slime. He followed Edgar across the cellar into a sort of tunnel. Here Edgar drew an end of candle from his pocket and lighted it. The tunnel was so low that Gaydon, though a shortish man, could barely hold his head erect. He followed Edgar to the end and up a flight of winding steps. The air grew warmer and dryer. They had risen above ground, the spiral wound within the thickness of a wall. The steps ended abruptly, there was no door visible; in face of them and on each side the bare stone walls enclosed them. Edgar stooped down and pressed with his finger on a round insignificant discoloration of the stone. Then he stood up again.

'You will breathe no word of this passage, Major Gaydon,' said he. 'The house was built a century ago when Rome was more troubled than it is to-day, but the passage was never more useful than now. Men from England, whose names it would astonish you to know, have trodden these steps on a secret visit to the King. Ah!' From the wall before their faces a great slab of

For the sharp agony ; now that my eyes
Are burning with the moisture of salt tears.
O Mary, I would fain run unto thee
And bury, like a child, my wretched face
In the soft texture of thy trailing robe.
But this is what I craved, O Mary, Mother ;
And I should thank thee for the granted prayer.
And yet, O Thou who understandest all,
Look in my heart and pity what is there.

[He sinks into a chair and buries head in his hands.]

Enter PRINCESS JOAN (singing).

*I met him in the forest
Upon a summer day,
The time between the musk-rose
And the first rose of May.*

JOAN. Is there not anything that I can do
To ease your suffering : lately there has come
A new physician from the far-off East,
Most skilled in remedies. Will you not see him ?

PRINCE. Oh, how can the physicians bring me aid ?
They know not whence my sickness came, nor why
It lingers. I am weary ; before long
I shall be well again ; this aching fever
Comes and then goes : like rain in fickle April.

JOAN. Then if you will not listen to physicians,
If it is nothing,—and they oft have told me
That there is nothing grave which ails you,—why,
My Lord, not strive to best the malady,
And go into the world again ? The Court
Is wearisome.

EDWARD. Sweet Joan, I am too weary ;

Believe me, if I could, I would be roused.

JOAN. Then I do pray you, see this new physician.

EDWARD. I will not see him, I have but a fever
Which all men know, who fight and travel far ;
But while it lasts it takes away the taste
Of the bright things of life. I would be quiet.

[*Exit PRINCESS, singing.*

*The bluebells that he gave me,
Lasted from morn till night ;
And long before they faded
He had forgotten quite.*

Enter SQUIRE.

SQUIRE. My Liege, a messenger
All big with news awaits your audience.

EDWARD. Usher him in forthwith. I will receive him.

MESSENGER. My Lord, I have a sorry tale to tell.
The city of Limoges, which has stood siege
Against the Dukes of Berry and of Bourbon,
And the great lords of France, has now been taken
Through basest treachery. The perjured bishop
Did secretly take counsel with the foe
And at the last surrendered the strong city
Into their hands.

EDWARD (*rising up from his chair in great anger*). Now
by my father's soul
I swear, and God has hitherto been pleased
To help me keep that oath, I will not pause
Nor taste a moment's peace until the traitor
Has dearly paid the price of treachery.
Summon my squires, call hither Thomas Felton
And the Chaptal de Buch, and every knight
Who pays me homage, for I go to war :

Bring me my armour, for I start to-day.
Haste, fetch the lords and nobles and instruct them
That we this very day march on Limoges,
Nor shall we rest until those city walls
Are razed unto the ground.

Enter SQUIRE.

Give me my armour
At once, I say. Here, help me buckle it.
[Tries, and falls back exhausted.]
I cannot rise ; I am as weak and helpless
As any babe. Think you because of that
He shall go scathless ? think you that my sickness
Shall hinder me from taking Limoges town ?
I will be carried to the battlefield,
Yea, borne upon a litter to the siege.
Tell every soldier to make ready now,
For the Black Prince goes to make war again.
[Fanfare of trumpets.]

ACT IV

SCENE I

Wood near Black Prince's Palace at Berkhamstead.

PRINCESS JOAN and NURSE.

JOAN. Where is the Prince ?

NURSE. Beyond the castle park
He rides with Richard in the further woods.

JOAN. 'Twas wonderful how speedily his health
Mended when he set foot on native soil.

NURSE. I have not seen him thus since his son died.
He was half dead when we set sail for England,
So weak, so worn. I thought he scarce could reach
The shore alive, such was the wasting fury
Of grief, yet that same sorrow at his heart
Towered up so high and cast so black a shadow
That he forgot his body's malady.
But now he is well-nigh his ancient self.
And yet I fear the words of the physician,
Who said the envious sickness lurked in ambush,
And might attack him unawares.

JOAN. But now
Think not on such sad things. 'Tis Edward, see.
Good morrow, my sweet Lord. Did you enjoy
A gallop in the fields ? Was Richard with you ?

[Exit NURSE.]

Enter EDWARD.

EDWARD. Yea, it was pleasant in the new-drenched
woodland.

JOAN. 'Tis long since you have wandered in the woods,

Since you have been so far.

EDWARD. Yes, not till now
Have I gone riding in the further forest.
It is most pleasant there ; the grass is starred
With primroses ; from elm to budding elm
The finches dart, and from the hollow oak tree
The blackbird whistles an unceasing song.
It is the dawn of summer. Little Richard
Rode without fear ; I think that he will prove
A gallant rider and a goodly knight.

JOAN. Should you not take him soon to London town
To see thy father, who complains, they say,
Of loneliness ?

EDWARD. That is a matter, Joan,
On which I need your counsel ; as you know.
It was soon after that most woeful time
When my blest mother, Queen Philippa, died,
My father fell into the scheming hands
Of some hard harpy ; who by shameless ways
Had wormed herself into the Court, alleging
A feigned friendship with my sainted mother.
The name she calls herself is Alice Ferrers.
They say she came from France, but whence she sprang,
And who she is, men know not. For a while
The matter was half veiled in secrecy ;
But on a sudden day this brazen woman
Did take upon herself the rank of Queen,
Degrading the King's office and his Court,
And recommending vice with rich display.
This woman, decked, they tell me, with the jewels
Which once my holy mother wore, does ride
Through London, habited as for a masque,
Dragging the King and the proud lords and knights
Close at her heels. To satisfy her whims

And wanton sports, the treasuries of the land
Are drained. When first I heeded this affair,
I thought to find in John of Gaunt, my brother,
An ally. He, alas ! refused his aid.
Therefore, at the new Parliament in April
I shall be present ; I shall free my country
From traitors who uphold a harlot's rule.

JOAN. But have you power enough ? She has the aid
Of Lancaster : and still the King is King.

EDWARD. My father now is helpless as a babe,
And any one can lead him ; if the Commons
Convict the knaves, he cannot choose but sign
The ordinance which seals their fate. My brother
Will not dare anything, for England's people
Are angered.

JOAN. Have you seen this Alice Ferrers ?

EDWARD. Since she has held dominion in the Court,
I have remained away in my own castle ;
Here, by the elms of Berkhamstead. The air
Is sweet after that suffocating Court :
I would not see her ; nor my honoured father
A helpless puppet in her hands ; and she
As good as Queen, there, where my holy mother
Was Queen ; decked with my mother's very jewels.
My mother's jewels ! Think upon it, Joan !

JOAN. They say she is an evil sorceress,
And can assume the shape of beast or bird.

EDWARD. Well, I shall need to see her, when I break
Her power, and drive her from the shore of England.

JOAN. My Lord, be not too harsh upon that day ;
Remember that she is a woman.

EDWARD. She !
She is no woman, but a perjured witch,
Fit to be burned or drowned in the deep sea.

SCENE II

In the woods, Berkhamstead. MARGARET and her MAID.

MARGARET. Oh, freedom is a blessed thing : 'tis sweet,
If only for one day, to walk and wander
According to one's whim. To live a day
Far from that doting King, who slays my soul.
Far from the hateful palace, where I see
None save dark faces, hungry for my fall,
Far from the city where I breathe but hate.
I walked at Westminster hard by the river
But yesterday, and heard the people mutter,
" There goes the bane of England, Alice Ferrers,
Child of the devil. Cursèd be her soul ! "
This, Mary, is Prince Edward's own demesne,
That is why fancy led me to this place ;
Look not affrighted ; there is naught to fear.
The Prince is sick, and seldom leaves the castle.
And should we see him coming in the woods,
Why, we should hide in the thick undergrowth,
And I might look upon his face once more.
For I have never seen so fair a face,
And there is no one like him in the world,
And I have never loved but him alone.

MAID. I cannot think, my lady, but this walk
Is fraught with danger.

MARGARET. Nay, for if he came,
We should descry him coming in the distance.
I pray that he will come, for as I told you,
I fain would gaze upon his face once more.
Now leave me, Mary, I would be alone. [Exit MARY.]

Mary spoke true. Oh, why have I come hither ?

It has but waked the demon of despair
That now possesses me, but sometimes seems
To sleep a listless slumber ; why, oh why
Have I as a lost angel come to gaze
On what was once my paradise of peace ?
I know it is remorse that drives me hither ;
Yet greater than my crime I deem the wrong
The gods have done to me. One time I thought
That power could fill the empty place of love.
Oh, foolish was the thought and vain the dream !
And long ago I thought that I could fill
The vacancy of love with hate and crime,
And, thus by wreaking the supremest wrong,
On Edward's love, could find a bitter peace.
Oh, foolish was that thought and vain that dream !

EDWARD *appears suddenly through the trees.*

EDWARD. My Margaret ! Oh, thou art come at last !
The gods are good : the Heavens have heard my prayer !
I knew that some time thou must surely come ;
Haste to my arms : nor waste one precious second
In craving for forgiveness,—that is given.
It was my fault that thou didst go away ;
My own, my grievous fault which I have wept
And expiated in long suffering ;
But see the wonder that the Heavens have done ;
They made me well, and gave me back my health
Just for the very season of thy coming ;
O Margaret, I love you now as then.
And you, do you still love me ?

MARGARET. Yes, my Lord.
I love you, Edward, more than all the world.

[They embrace.]

EDWARD. O Margaret, I knew that thou must come !

I prayed to God to give me strength to wait ;
Oh, almost did I yield and I was near
To hopelessness ; my faith, my hope, my strength
Were ebbing like the tide. And yet one thought,
One thought more bright than any moon, one hope
More strong than adamant, one little hope
Still lingered like a hard invincible gem
In the cold darkness of my heart. The hope,
Which day by day grew into certainty,
That I should see you, meet you once again.
And every day I asked Our Blessèd Lady
To grant me life till I should see your face
Once more, to keep you safe from hurt and harm ;
I clung to life by that prevailing prayer.
But you, what have the Heavens done to you ?

MARGARET. I have lived like a blind and helpless ghost
Lost in the shadow of an endless night ;
Like a numbed creature in a winter world.

EDWARD. All these last years have been a winter dream
Which makes the awakening of the spring more sweet,
For now it is the spring, and I have met you
Among the flowers of April. God is kind.
When hope in all things fair, when desperate faith
In truth and good had perished utterly,
When courage and endurance were nigh dead,
You rise upon my life again. The spring
Is here ; the trees are scarcely green, the earth
Is sweet with tender shoots ; but you, too swift,
Come bringing not the dawn but the full noon ;
Not spring, but the whole majesty of summer—
The summer with his robe of gorgeous gold,
Drenched with the blood of roses and of poppies ;
Stiff with the splendid ripple of ripe corn ;
Embroidered with the wings of dragon-flies ;

His arms all laden with soft crimson fruit,
Crowned with the sickle of the silver moon,
And bearing the tall hollyhock for sceptre.
Throned on the haze of noonday, with a noise
Of turtle-doves and bees and nightingales,
His minstrels, bathed in a great cloud of fragrance
That sheds and scatters many million scents ;
Some warm from the mown hayfields, others cool
From the moist haunts of floating water-lilies,
Some languorous from the creeping jessamine,
Some fresh and dewy from the honeysuckle,
Some aromatic from the dying leaves
Of strawberries, some dreamy from the pink,
Some rich and riotous from the dark rose,
Some heavy from the lily. And in his eyes,
And drooping from the shadow of his hair,
The softness of June twilight and the rapture
Of the star-haunted, hot, midsummer night.

MARGARET. My Lord, my warrior. Through these lonely
years,

I have known one thought only : it was thou.
Oh, greatly did I long to see thy face—
Thy face, the lantern of my life, once more.
Therefore I kneel to thee, imploring pardon
For leaving thee. I was like one possessed,
Because I thought you did not love me more.
My life, too, has been one long winter-tide.
The day I left you, then my heart did perish,
And in its empty precinct dwelt despair.
Therefore, my Lord, my warrior, and my king,
I do implore forgiveness. Through these years
I, too, have clung to life by one strong prayer—
The prayer that I might see thy face once more.

EDWARD. But why speak thus ? Now I am well again,

And nothing in the world shall ^{un}sunder us :
But where are you ? and whence have you come hither
To seek me in my home ?

MARGARET. I now do dwell
In London.

EDWARD. Thus alone ?

MARGARET. Yes, quite alone.

EDWARD. Tell me thy dwelling ;—before very long
I, too, will come to London to be with thee.

MARGARET. Oh, come not thou to London. Let us meet
Here in these woods. I do not love the town.

EDWARD. Nay, but I must. So say where thou dost dwell.

MARGARET. I have a little house on Fish Street Hill.
But, hark ! the noise of hoofs.

EDWARD. I shall be there.
The day before the Parliament doth meet. [Exit.

Enter MARY.

MARGARET. Mary, come hither, with all speed, come
hither—

Thou sawest it was the Prince : he loves me still,
And pardoned me without a word or question.

O merciful, sweet God, what shall I do ?

He questioned me about my dwelling-house.

I lied : I could not speak the hideous truth.

Mary, how could I tell the truth to him ?

The fatal truth ? 'Twere better to have told him :

Surely my lie will swiftly find me out.

I told him that I dwelt where thy old mother

Dwells on the hill ; and thither will he seek me

The day before the Parliament does meet.

There must I be ; for he will surely come.

O Queen of Heaven, help me in my need !

SCENE III

A room in Fish Street Hill. MARGARET and MARY.

MARGARET. I have not slept these many nights ; the days
Pass like a heavy dream ; what shall I do ?

'Tis past the noonday and he is not come.

Think you that he will come ? What think you, Mary ?

MARY. I think that if he fall not sick again,
He surely will come here.

MARGARET. I thought one moment
That I would let thee bide here with a message
To say—— But what could I have said to him ?
That I was sick ? then he would wish to see me :
That I no longer loved him ? no, my God !
I cannot say that dreadful thing again.
I have been sorely punished for that saying.
That I was dead ? 'Twere best, to make it true.
And yet methinks 'twere cowardly to die
Before the last necessity had come.

[*Knock.*

Enter EDWARD, very pale.

EDWARD. Margaret, my love ; see, Margaret, I am here ;
Is this thy dwelling ? art thou fallen now
To such a home ?

MARGARET. Let us not speak of that.
You are most pale to-day, my Lord. The sickness
Has left you, has it not ?

EDWARD. It all but vanished,
I thought : but now it is come back again ;
And I am eaten with a fiery fever.
I knew the wondrous star of happiness
Could not for ever shine.

MARGARET. You need but rest,

My Lord : once get you back to Berkhamstead,
It soon will pass away.

EDWARD. Do you know why
I come to London for the Parliament ?

MARGARET. Nay, I know little of the State affairs.

EDWARD. I come to rid the nation of its foes ;
To break the schemers, and to hang the traitors.
I come to show my brother, John of Gaunt,
That I, not he, am still the heir of England.
Yet what I chiefly come for, my proud purpose,
Is to deliver my fair land of England
From out a harlot's hands ; to crush the power
Of that foul witch, that carrion of hell
Whose name is Alice Ferrers.

[MARGARET gives a suppressed cry.

EDWARD. Can you know her ?

MARGARET. Nay : it was but the accent of your wrath
That frightened me.

EDWARD. My violence shall be deeds.
That is why I am here, although the fever
Burns in my bones like fire, although, perchance,
I have not many weeks to live : till then
I shall live : after that I little care
What may befall.

MARGARET. Are you so very sure
That she is guilty ?

EDWARD. She ? What dost thou mean ?

MARGARET. Some women have no fortune in this world.
I cannot see so terrible a crime
In that this woman is your father's mistress.
If some one had once come to you, and cursed
My name in the sweet season of Bordeaux,
What would you not have done ? Oh, heed ; oh, think
Of that far-off enchanted time when we

Were happy ; when we loved and took no thought ;
When every day we parted but to meet
Again the morrow, under orchard trees,
Or on the gleaming sand by the pale sea,
At sunrise or at sunset, at the dawn,
Or in the twilight, I was ever there ;
And little did we heed the busy world
Or talk of men. Your kingdom was my face ;
My universe was hidden in your heart.
So for the sake of that divinest dream
Be not now over-harsh. But rather think
What you had felt, had some one, with stern words,
Frowned on our happiness.

EDWARD. O Margaret,
You know not what you say. You have not seen
Such women. There can be no talk of love.
My father now is old, decrepit, weak,
And wistful in his dotage, full of greed ;
A harlot snatches him, and he becomes
A helpless puppet in her hands ; and more,
Her use of power is deadly, for she helps
Our foes ; and drains the riches of the State
By luxury.

MARGARET. How can you thus be sure ?
This woman needs must have a million foes,
And not one friend, and no one to defend her,
Save the old helpless King. It is most cruel
To put the fault at once upon the woman.
You have no evidence but idle rumour :
Haply she was unhappy and sore tempted.
And as for the dark plots you say she weaves,
Most like they blame her but to screen themselves ;
Thus would all subtle courtiers ever do,
And schemers who infest the homes of kings.

I pray you be not pitiless to her,
For you were ever chivalrous and gentle
To every woman.

EDWARD. Yes, I must be harsh :
I shall seek out this Ferrers for myself,
And tell her in her face what I have told
To thee, and more.

MARGARET. Oh, mercy for this woman !
What has she done to you ? Oh, pity her ;
Let her defence be that she was surrounded
By evil men, who have no fear of God,
Nor man, nor devil ; and, to shield oneself,
It is an easy thing to lay the guilt
On such a woman. Large and high of soul,
Thou with the eyes of kindness, thou, Black Prince,
Thou who hast been so courteous and so gentle,
So mild in thy great mind, so fair, so equal,
So just, so generous, now be merciful :
Have pity on this miserable woman.
I pray you, Edward, now with my whole heart,
Upon my knees, with tears, to pity her :
For my sake ; for the past's most holy sake,
For love's sake, for the love you have for me ;
Be merciful, my Lord, and show compassion.

EDWARD. How can you, Margaret, defend her thus ?
Think of the means this harlot has employed
To snatch at power and gold : an old man's lust !
She young and beautiful !——

[MARGARET stops his mouth with her hand.

MARGARET. It is enough.

[Pause.

Hear me, my Edward, hear and understand :
When I was sure that you no longer loved me,
My love turned to unutterable hate.

Hating, I sought the uttermost revenge
And crime unspeakable.

[*Kneels.*

Now draw thy sword
And slay me here, for I am Alice Ferrers.

[EDWARD looks at her as though dazed. He then draws his sword, hesitates a moment, but lets the sword drop out of his hands. He then walks out of the room in silence without looking at MARGARET.]

SCENE IV

Room in Westminster. EDWARD is lying on a couch. Priests and Friars are standing round it. They go out. The NURSE sits by him. The sound of the organ is heard from the chapel next door. Bells ring.

EDWARD. What is to-day that bells ring ?

NURSE.

The high day

Of Trinity.

EDWARD. Oh, I am well content
To die upon a Sunday and in summer.
Upon the high day of the Trinity
Which all my life I kept with solemn song.
Sing me to sleep : some ancient lullaby.

NURSE (*sings*).

*From the bleak sand and the grey sand
(O son o' mine, good-bye),
To the shore of gold and the cornland,
To conquer or to die.*

The low cloud and the grey cloud
(O son o' mine, good-bye),
It hangs and lowers like a shroud
Across the blood-red sky.

The soft sound and the loved sound
(O son o' mine, good-bye) :
" *Mother, I have a mortal wound,*"
It is my own son's cry.

The horn call and the glad call
(O son o' mine, good-bye):
" *Now dig the grave and weave the pall,*
For I am soon to die."

The lone bell and the sad bell
(O son o' mine, good-bye) :
" *Tell them, mother, before I fell,*
That I fought gallantly."

The known tread and the strong tread
(O son o' mine, good-bye) :
" *One told me you were cold and dead,*
But I heeded not the lie."

By sunshine or by moonshine
(O son o' mine, good-bye) :
" *Come back to me, O son o' mine,*
I've waited patiently."

The loud song and the strange song
(O son o' mine, good-bye) :
" *I've watched and waited now so long,*
Come back before I die."

The Black Prince

*From the bleak sand and the grey sand
(O son o' mine, good-bye) :
To the shore of gold and the cornland,
To conquer or to die.*

EDWARD. I wish to speak with my son Richard, now,
While yet my weakening utterance may be heard.
Open the doors, call hither all my men,
That I may thank them for their services ;
That they may swear allegiance to my son.

Enter the Black Prince's soldiers.

EDWARD (*to his men*). Sirs, it is strange how, when I was quite young,
When I came home from Crécy, you would speak
Of how I should some day prove a great King,
Haply the greatest of my country's Kings,
And win large lands and many victories.
The victories I won : but where are they ?
All that we fought for has been lost again ;
My conquests are a half-forgotten dream.
Yet haply, but the bare names of my battles
May strike a spark in English hearts some day,
In the far future ; haply, hearts will beat
Quicker when they shall hear those names but spoken,
Poitiers and Crécy—faint and far away
It seems—as though the long wars had befallen
Some other man, not me. Yet now I die ;
I rail not at the past, and I would live
My life again, save the last shadowed years.
My death-knell rang on Navarettè field.
Since then I have not lived, or lived in vain.
Sirs, you have served me loyally, and though
To each I cannot give his guerdon, God

By His most holy Name shall give it you.
I recommend to you my son ; as yet
He is but small, but, as you have served me,
So, from your heart, I pray you may serve him.
Call Richard and my wife : I wish to see them.

Enter RICHARD and PRINCESS JOAN.

EDWARD. Joan, I have asked forgiveness for my sins.
Shriven and housell'd by the holy priest,
My soul is clean ; I am prepared to die ;
I die contented ; I leave little Richard,
Take care of him ; and thou, my son, remember
Thou hadst a father who did never know
A coward's heart, nor saw the face of fear ;
Nor thought upon the whereabouts of Death.
Whose motto was " High Spirit " ; who at one time,
When God bereft him of his hopes and dreams,
His strength, his health, his power, his happiness,
Was tempted to surrender, to despair,
To make Death his ally ; but being a soldier,
Defeated, he deserted not the field
While the fight lasted. Thus must thou do also,
That, when thou diest, men may say of thee,
" The Prince of chivalry in all the world,
Has left in no dishonourable wise
The lists, to go and slumber in his tent." [Pause.
For though my lot in life was with the conquered,
I have yielded not till the hour of death ;
But now at last I may lay down my arms.
Hark ! a strange bugle-call that summons me,
Far off from the dominion of the dead !
Soon shall I pass into my kingdom, soon
Shall I assume my high inheritance,
Where there awaits no throne nor crown for me ;

Naught but the friend to whom I looked for help,
The sure friend and the strong, unfailing friend,
Who held aloof his hand and veiled his face ;
Now I shall feel the solace of that hand,
And gaze upon the glory of that face.
For Death, my friend, who shunned me for so long,
Holds out his hand, and hides his face no more.
Can you not hear the roll of phantom drums ?
The noise of arms ? For now the sleeping dead,
The valiant dead who perished unafraid,
All stir to welcome me, and while I march
To Death's triumphant portal, I shall hear
The clash of ghostly arms and the strange bugle ;
But once within the silvery hall of dusk
There will be no more noise. I shall forget.
At last I shall lie down among the dead,
And shut my eyes without the dread of dawn.
I, likewise, now, the heir of happiness,
Rich in my portion of the priceless gift,
Shall sleep beneath the radiant vault of peace,
Among the brave who lie for ever still.

*[He closes his eyes. From the chapel the choir is
heard singing :*

*Benedictus es Domine, qui intueris abyssos, et sedes
super Cherubim.*

*Benedictus es Domine in firmamento cœli, et laud-
abilis in sæcula.*

Alleluia, alleluia.

*Benedictus es Domine Deus patrum nostrorum, et
laudabilis in sæcula.*

Alleluia.

EDWARD (*opening his eyes*). My flesh is wasted. Narrow
is my house.

God, of Thy mercy pity my poor soul,
And pardon my wrong-doing in this world.
Into the glory of Thy paradise,
Where none is wretched, Christ receive my soul.
Open the doors.

*[He shuts his eyes. The soldiers open the doors
wide. Sound of singing comes from the chapel.]*

*Enter the KING, the DUKE OF LANCASTER, LORDS,
BARONS, and KNIGHTS.*

NURSE. He sleeps, but not to wake.
The Prince who never knew a coward's heart.
Kneel down, and pray to God, the King of Kings,
Who died for us upon the shameful Cross,
That He may pardon all that he misdid,
And give him of His gift His paradise.
[They kneel round the couch.]

●

GASTON DE FOIX

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

Ὠκύμορόν με λέγουσι δαήμονες ἄνδρες ἄστρων.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

GASTON DE FOIX. (*Duke of Nemours.*)

FRANÇOIS DE RISSAC.

BAYART.

LOYS D'ARS.

HAUBOURDIN. } (*In the Duke of Nemours' Army.*)

LA PALISSE. }

ALBERTUS MIRANDOLA.

REMY. (*The Court Jester.*)

A SOOTHSAYER.

A SOLDIER.

MARY.

CASSANDRA. } (*Ladies of the Queen of France.*)

HELEN. }

JANE. }

ALICE. (*Mary's Lady.*)

MUMMERS, SOLDIERS, LORDS, LADIES.

The action takes place between 1510-1512.

THE FIRST ACT AT THE COURT OF LOUIS XII., IN FRANCE, 1510.

THE SECOND ACT AT THE CASTLE OF FRANÇOIS DE RISSAC, AT CARPI,
NEAR MODENA, CHRISTMAS, 1511.

THE THIRD ACT: SCENE I., AT THE CASTLE OF FRANÇOIS DE RISSAC;
SCENE II., BEFORE THE TOWN OF RAVENNA, EASTER DAY, 1512.

A week elapses between Acts II. and III.

ACT I

A hall in the Palace of Louis XII.

MARY, HELEN, CASSANDRA, JANE.

HELEN. The bell is striking noon ! My broidery
Will scarce be finished for the tournament.

JANE. Already noon. The reapers go to rest,
And all is still.

CASSANDRA. My scarf is ready now.

HELEN. Your scarf is blue—the blue of sapphire skies ;
One summer night a prince will come for you,
And he will bear you in a slumberous ship
To lands of azure hills and dreamy seas.
Cassandra, yours is green as summer grass ;
Your life shall be as glad as summer song ;
And mine is like a flaming sunset cloud.

MARY. That signifies dominion, power, and glory ;
But mine is red as blood.

HELEN. Have you thought, Jane,
For whom your scarf shall be this afternoon ?

JANE. I have not thought. I should not be ill-pleased
If Gabriel de la Chastre should win the day.

CASSANDRA. Oh, who shall wear my token green as grass ?
For life is now like to a summer day,
All green and gold ; and in the rustling trees
I hear the echo of a song I know,
I hear a footfall in the deep green grass.

HELEN. I pray that Balthazar may win ; and Mary,
Whom do you pray for ?

MARY. I pray for no man ;
I fear to pray.

HELEN. I know of one who dreams
A crown from you.

CASSANDRA. Yes, François de Rissac ;
He sings sweet ballads, and the name of Mary
Shines, like a golden thread, throughout his song.

MARY. I care not if he win or fail.

HELEN. Your cheeks
Belie your words.

CASSANDRA. He silently has pined
With love of you. He is a son of earth,
A child of the enchanted southern soil ;
He goes to battle, thrumming on a lute,
A joyous song for ever on his lips.
Our King has lately granted him large lands
In Milan's Duchy, and this pleasant gift
Would be for you.

JANE. Hark ! in the court below
I hear the sound of hoofs.

CASSANDRA. Oh, come ! Oh, see !
Two horsemen clatter through the castle gate ;
'Tis François de Rissac. Come, Mary.

[They all go to the window except MARY.]

MARY. Nay,
Truly I have no care to see his face.

CASSANDRA. And yet no sunnier, braver countenance
Shines in the Court ; you are not grateful, Mary,
He has no thought but you.

[Looking through the window.]
His henchman follows

And now another rider joins him ; look,
Look ! Gaston.

MARY. Which ? For there are many here.

CASSANDRA. Gaston de Foix, the young Duke of Nemours.

[MARY goes to the window.

He, beside François, seems a very child.

MARY (*looking through the window*). Gaston is far the nobler of the two.

CASSANDRA. So diverse they ; but Rissac is a man,
And Gaston but a boy : a very child.

MARY. You deem him but a beardless boy ; to me
He seems the golden sun-god's youngest child ;
And delicate but as the thin gold tongues
Of fire are delicate ; splendid and swift,
As flames that clothe a god's divinity.

CASSANDRA. You seek but to deceive us ; love you not
Rissac ?

MARY. No, no, I swear I love him not.

CASSANDRA. Do you love Gaston ?

MARY. No, I love no man.

I know not if I love ; and yet I dream
That if some day I loved, 'twould be a man
Like Gaston—young and swift and strange as he.

CASSANDRA. Why call him strange ?

MARY. Yes, truly he is strange.

As spirits are, or a thing half-divine.
I dreamed a wondrous dream two nights ago,
And I will tell it you. It was the night
The jester, Remy, sang to us that song
Of how Demeter wandered through the world
Lamenting for her child Persephone.
And, finding shelter in a herdsman's home,
Nursed a young babe, who in a cradle lay—
A child its parents called Demophöon—
And dipped him like a brand in fire divine,
And fed him with ambrosia like a god.
For she would fain have made a god of him,

Albeit, the mother, peeping in on them,
Fearful of the strange glory, cried, and then
The slighted goddess left the herdsman's home,
And thus the child lost immortality.
Yet something of that fire clung to him still,
And he could never be as other men
Though mortal ; something of divinity
Lingered, as clings the scent of incense-smoke
To silent aisles.

CASSANDRA. But tell what you did dream.

MARY. I dreamed Demophöon was born again,
Clothed in the shape of Gaston, whom we know ;
And that among his fellow-men he seemed
A stranger, and a man of alien race ;
For, in his soul, there shone the spark divine,
And an unearthly whisper in his heart
For ever spake, and unfamiliar seemed
To him the sight and speech of other men,
And the loud pageant of the busy world ;
So longed his soul for its bright native air,
Till, one day, as if tired of banishment
And foreign tongues and sights, he went away,
And, following Death unto the fields of light,
He thus returned to his immortal home.
I know not why I dreamed this.

CASSANDRA. Sure, oh, sure
You love him, and one day shall be his bride.

MARY. He is betrothed already to his cousin ;
Moreover, it is prophesied that I
Shall kill the man I wed.

CASSANDRA. A murderess, you !
Who made this prophecy ?

MARY. When I was born
In Brittany, unto my baptism came

An aged crone who sang, they say, this rhyme :

“ Thy cradle song is the voice of the wave,
And winds that moan o’er the seaman’s grave ;
Beware of the place where warriors fall,
And pay no heed to the trumpet’s call.
And if with love thou lovest a man,
Bid him begone, ere thou prove his ban ;
For he whom thou shalt truly wed,
Shall seek too soon the land of the dead.”

CASSANDRA. And do you heed this prophecy ?

MARY.

I fear

To tempt the Fates with slighting disbelief ;
I think not of it.

HELEN.

Come, Cassandra, come,
The Queen awaits us.

MARY.

I will come anon.

[*Exeunt* CASSANDRA, HELEN, and JANE. REMY,
the Jester, enters in gallery overlooking the hall
and remains there, leaning over the balustrade.

Enter FRANÇOIS DE RISSAC.

FRANÇOIS. Are you alone, my Lady ?

MARY.

Yes, my Lord.

FRANÇOIS. I wear your colours in the tournament
To-day, your crimson colours ; if I win
Will you reward me with your own sweet hands ?
And will you give me a more rich reward ?

MARY. The meaning of my Lord is far from me.
If you should win, I’ll crown you with green leaves.
What other gifts have I to give ?

FRANÇOIS.

Ah, Lady,

Lately I have foregone the accustomed song,
The dance, and I have shunned the merry Court ;

But, in the twilight, underneath thy window!
I have sung plaintive ballads to the stars ;
Now, when I wander in the forest ways,
The trees, the running stream, repeat thy name.
If I but sit beside a cool dark well,
I see thy face reflected in its deeps,
And if I turn for solace to my lute,
The name of Mary trembles on the strings.
Oh, Lady, you must know I pine for you.

MARY. I love no man, and I shall never wed.

FRANÇOIS. Oh, speak not rashly, speak no hasty words ;
Thy gentle eyes belie thy cruel speech,
For love is trembling in thy soft sweet eyes.
Oh, Lady, heed ; my love is swift as fire,
And constant as the stars, as strong, as true
As the great sword I know so well to wield.
Can you be pitiless, and speak my doom ?

MARY (*hesitating*). Oh, leave me, Sir, for I am sore perplexed.

FRANÇOIS. Thy heart is melting. Heaven has heard my prayer.
Thou yieldest.

MARY. Nay, I pray you leave me now.
Leave me ; I must have time to think and pray.
Ere set of sun you shall receive my word—
My yea or nay. I pray you, gentle sir,
To leave me ; I will summon you anon.

FRANÇOIS. Then be it so ; but oh, be pitiful,
Sweet lady, send the summons very soon.

[*Exeunt FRANÇOIS and MARY.*]

Enter GASTON DE FOIX and REMY.

GASTON. Hie, Fool, come hither ; sing to me the song
You sang last night.



HE BLEW OVER HER HAND AND WOULD HAVE KISSED HER

GASTON. But, if I lose, who wins ?

FOOL. Who but your friend, Lord François de Rissac ?

GASTON. He is the better warrior.

FOOL. Better friend.

GASTON. A better friend than I ? I'd die for him.

FOOL. Perchance ; so said St. Peter long ago.

GASTON. And shall he win the tournament ?

FOOL. To-day ?

Nay, you shall win the crown, but he the prize.

GASTON. I can no longer hear such talk ; begone.

[*Exit* REMY.]

Enter MARY.

GASTON. Ah ! Lady, hail ! There is a tournament
To-day ; shall you attend it with the Queen ?

MARY. I come, my Lord, and think to see you win.

GASTON. No, there are others, better far than I.

I am a boy here, among men.

MARY. And yet

I have oft seen you vanquish famous men,

As yet untaught in failure ; and I dream

That fortune has endowed you with a boon.

GASTON. What boon ?

MARY. It is the gift of excellence,

The secret of perpetual victory.

GASTON. You mock me ; yet there is one boon I'd crave :
A garland from your hands.

MARY. Sir, your betrothed

Will have prepared a fitter crown than I.

GASTON. Betrothed ! I greatly doubt if we shall wed.
This swift betrothal was the King's desire—
No handiwork of hers or mine.

MARY. She's fair.

GASTON. Yes, like an ivory statue set in gems.

But I know one who brings, where'er she goes,
The freshness of the forest, the glad air
Of beaches, clamorous with breaking surf.
The thought of her is tranquil as the star
That trembles through the wet tempestuous twilight,
Piercing the vault of the blue firmament ;
Yet is she fashioned like an April hour
Of storm and sudden sunshine, and her voice
Is like the wild appeal of sighing winds ;
Her soul is filled with warmth and restless fire,
And charged with shadow and with mystery.

Enter SQUIRE.

SQUIRE (*to GASTON*). My Lord, the King doth summon
you.

GASTON. I come.

Farewell, my Lady, till this afternoon.

[*Exit GASTON.*

Enter REMY, the JESTER.

FOOL. Hail, little child !

MARY. O Fool, O wise, wise Fool,
Dear Fool, who art far wiser than the wise—
Kind Fool, my ancient playfellow, my friend,
My only friend when first I came to Court
A stranger, from the land of Brittany,
Who taught me the small knowledge that is mine ;
Who cheered my loneliness with jest and song,
Who helped me with sage warning and advice ;
Again, as in old days, I come to you,
For I am sore perplexed.

FOOL. My help is here,
Still ready ; tell me your perplexity,
As long ago, when, climbing on my knees,

You sobbed your childish troubles in my ear.

MARY. You see this scarlet blossom in my hair ?
It is the badge of François de Rissac,
Now shall I wear it at the tournament
To-day ? for he this morning sued my hand,
And I can never love him.

FOOL. 'Tis not hard
To wed the man you love.

MARY. I dare not, Remy ;
'Tis prophesied that I shall kill that man.

FOOL. Then wed the man you love and let him die,
And he will die content.

MARY (*speaking to herself*). The man I love.
I am not sure I love him. Do I love ?
Or is it but the fancy of my brain ?
I know not if he loves me ; he is young ;
A careless boy—surely too young to love.

FOOL. Gaston de Foix ?

MARY. How know you it was he ?

FOOL. I have not eyes in vain ; he loves you true.

MARY. I thought so once ; yet did he truly love,
He would have spoken all his love to me ;
And if he loves me, I'll not be his wife
And cause his death.

FOOL. Nay, listen, Fate is subtle.
Try to elude her, she will have her way.

MARY. And if he died ? If I but knew he loved me—
Moreover, he's betrothed to the Princess,
His cousin ; tell me, Remy, what to say
To François de Rissac ; he comes anon.
I think I will say yea and go with him
Away to Italy, and there forget
This fantasy of mine.

FOOL. And cause his death ?

MARY. The prophecy does warn me to beware
Of him I loved, if I do read it rightly ;
For if I wedded him, 'twould prove his death.
I do not love him. Tell me what to say.

FOOL. Too wise a fool am I to give advice.

MARY. I know he loves me ; haply it were best
To wed him, for he is an honest man,
And kind, and gentle, and I should have peace.

FOOL (*looking out of the window*). See, they now walk
together through the yard.

MARY (*going to the window and looking out*). O Gaston,
thou art like a tall white flower !
I will not put the sickle in Death's hand.

No, Gaston, thou shalt never die through me !

FOOL. My words are vain. Do as you will ; he
comes.

MARY. Gaston ?

FOOL. No, François de Rissac. Farewell.

. [*FOOL walks up into the gallery.*

Enter FRANÇOIS DE RISSAC.

FRANÇOIS. I could no longer bear the long suspense.

MARY. I had not sent a summons to you, Sir,
All unprepared you find me.

FRANÇOIS. The delay
Was all too long for my distracted heart ;
Now by the crimson flower that decks your hair
My heart takes hope. Oh, quickly seal my fate.
You speak no word.

MARY. I spoke the truth to-day ;
I told you that it was not wise to wed me.

FRANÇOIS. Let us forget these shadowy fantasies,
Let my love be the daylight of thy life.

MARY. I know not what to say. Oh, help me, God !

FRANÇOIS. 'Tis true, 'tis true, the Heavens have heard my prayer !

The gates of Paradise are opened wide !

I read the answer in thy speaking eyes.

MARY. God help me, O God help me, if I sin !

[*Exeunt BOTH.*]

Enter CASSANDRA, HELEN, JANE. FOOL walks down from the gallery.

CASSANDRA. Mary, where is she ?

HELEN.

A few minutes past

Through the long corridor I saw her go,

And by the chapel grating pause, and say

A prayer ; and as she prayed, I heard her weep.

FOOL. She will have need of prayer.

CASSANDRA.

Oh, cease this talk ;

Thou croakest like a raven, dismally.

We all need prayer, but she not more than we.

JANE. I met her now this moment on the stair,

With François, in his eyes was happiness.

FOOL. Yes, in his eyes.

CASSANDRA.

And in her eyes, dear fool.

'Tis long since he has loved her and she him.

I was not blinded by the words she spake

Of Gaston.

FOOL. Women are surpassing wise.

Here comes Sir Gaston.

Enter GASTON.

GASTON.

Gentle ladies, say,

Where may be your companion, Lady Mary ?

CASSANDRA. I know not ; we will seek, and bid her come.

[*Exeunt LADIES.*]

GASTON (*to REMY*). Do you know why I seek her ?

FOOL. I have guessed ;
But it may be too late.

GASTON. I pray you now
Speak no ambiguous words.

FOOL. She loves you, Sir.

GASTON. Are you so sure of this ?

FOOL. Yes, very sure.
But wherefore have you waited, Sir, to speak ?
Why have you not declared your love for her,
And taken her by storm ?

GASTON. 'Tis true ; but I
Had meant to speak to-day ; is it too late ?

FOOL. She loved you ever since she came to Court,
But her heart wavers with a hundred doubts ;
She's vexed with omens, prompt unto despair.
Sir, you must speak at once ; no doubtful words.

GASTON. There is no ground to think it is too late ?
Is there another whom she loves ?

FOOL. She comes
Herself ; best question her.

Enter MARY.

GASTON. Sweet Lady, stay,
For I have many words to speak with you.

MARY. O Sir, you greatly honour me. I, too,
Have news for you ; the news of my betrothal
To François de Rissac, your noble friend.

[*Exit MARY.*

Enter CASSANDRA and FOOL.

CASSANDRA. Lord Gaston, have you heard ?

GASTON. Yes, I have heard.

CASSANDRA. And she has loved him long !

GASTON. I knew not that.

CASSANDRA. There is great joy in store for them.

GASTON.

I wish

Long life to them, and all prosperity.

CASSANDRA (*going to the door*). After the tournament we meet again.

[*Exit CASSANDRA.*]

GASTON. O Remy, you were right. I was too late ;
So will it always be, and I shall find
No joy on earth, and no serenity.

FOOL. They say that you will be the king of Men.

GASTON. What is the kingdom worth, if in my soul
There cannot be the calm of sovereignty ?
I shall not find felicity on earth,
Nor ever taste of peace until I die.
The world is smiling around me : I am young
And see myself already lifted high ;
And yet my soul is like a bird that strayed
From skies of sunlight, who in the strange air
Must sing and soar unceasingly, yet feel
The while a fiery restlessness at heart ;
And though he sing the sweetest of all songs,
And though he soar so swiftly that men say,
“ This is the fairest of all birds,” yet he
Has no delight in singing, no desire
To soar, and, heedless of the alien praise,
Longs only for the day of his return,
Where there shall be no need for flight and song.
And now I go to win the tournament ;
Haply, in fighting there may still be joy,
Although there be no joy in victory.

ACT II

*Christmas, 1511. Room in François de Rissac's Castle at Carpi.
In the fireplace to the left logs are burning. It is evening. A
sound of talking and music is heard without.*

Enter MARY, FRANÇOIS, and SOLDIERS.

FRANÇOIS. 'Tis time for us to go.

MARY.

Can you not wait

Until to-morrow morn? 'Tis Christmas Eve.

FRANÇOIS. I cannot tarry, for my men and I
Must by to-morrow reach Bologna.

MARY.

Stay

Until to-morrow morning.

FRANÇOIS.

Nay, love, nay,

I go to seek news of the enemy.

But you shall not be lonely, for I leave

Our friend, the gallant Gaston, with his men.

What better company could you desire?

MARY. Until to-morrow: that is all I ask.

FRANÇOIS. No, love, it cannot be: and now farewell.

Enter GASTON DE FOIX.

GASTON. You start? then fare you well, my friend, and I
Here will remain till I receive dispatches
That bring the words and wishes of the King,
Concerning the attack.

FRANÇOIS.

Since your descent
In Italy, they have good cause to fear.

They name you Heaven's thunderbolt.

(GASTON *makes a gesture of impatience.*)

Nay, heed,

You are a boy in years—— Ah ! in all times
Some youth has scaled Fame's dizzy mountain-top,
And snatched the golden leaves that shine like stars
In cloudlands sought in vain by older men.

And now, beloved friend, I say farewell.

GASTON. Farewell ; God-speed ; a swift and safe return.

FRANÇOIS. Now farewell, Mary, my beloved wife.

[*Kisses MARY, who leads him to the door, and follows him out ; they remain outside a moment. A clash of arms is heard and a noise of drums and music. This is heard for several minutes, gradually diminishing.*]

MARY *re-enters.*

MARY. Come to the casement ; see how the moonlight
glints

Upon the golden armour and the snow.

Hark to that noise of drums. How often I
Have heard it in my dreams, and now to-night
I hear it true.

GASTON. Your heart goes with that host
To war, and hovers near your husband's heart ;
There is but little cause to fear.

MARY.

For him

I have no fear at all.

GASTON. Then wherefore tremble ?

MARY. 'Tis sadness makes me tremble, and not fear.

GASTON. Ah, you must be exceeding sorrowful
Now you have said farewell to him you love.

MARY. I have no fear for him : 'tis Christmas Eve
Which makes me sad, I think of far-off things—

Of time long past when I hailed Christmas Day
With gladness, as the harbinger of joy :
The herald of another happy year.

GASTON. But you are still so young.

MARY. We both are young.

The day I married I was younger still—

Too young.

GASTON. Yet you had loved him long already ?

MARY. I ? Wherefore think you so ?

GASTON. Cassandra told me.

MARY. Cassandra ! How that name brings back to me
The days of old !

GASTON. To me, too, my glad days.

MARY. Your glad days are yet scarce begun.

GASTON. My days

Of gladness have been lived. They are all dead.
And there will be no new glad days for me.

MARY. For you ! O Gaston, this is strange mockery—
You, to whom life lies open like the lists,
Where every honoured prize the world can give
Awaits you—you, who scarce more than a boy
Are the first Captain of a mighty nation ;
So that, if you should die to-day, your death
Would live like an immortal drop of blood
Upon the scroll of history ; your name
Would echo down the winding stair of time,
And moisten the hard eyes of men with the sight
Of those who wander in the happy fields
With Hector and Achilles ; those whose names
Speak to the world of wasted bravery,
Of fleeting splendour and unfinished song ;
Of those who on the altar of all time
Like lilies lie, a silver sacrifice,
Most beautiful, most piteous, and most calm :

Smiling with Death's triumphant listlessness,
And crowned with immortality of Fame.

GASTON. Mary, do you remember long ago
The day you told me that you were betrothed ?

MARY. I mind the day—ay, well !

GASTON. That afternoon
There was a tournament before the King ;
I won that tournament, and I received
A crown of laurels from the Queen's own hands.
Do you think, Mary, that my joy was great
When I received that crown ?

MARY. I think your joy
Must have been truly great.

GASTON. There was no joy,
Mary, upon that August afternoon,
Amid the blaze and pomp of arms, amid
The cheers of victory that called my name,
There was no joy for me. There was despair.
Since then I have not hoped.

MARY. What thing is this ?
Gaston, I know not what you mean——

GASTON. Then heed,
And I will make it clear. We soon must part,
I may be killed : we may not meet again,
Alone, as now ; it may be the last time
I speak with you, so will I tell you all.
Do you remember how we met that morning,
And that I spake of my betrothal ?

MARY. Yes.

GASTON. Do you remember that I spake of one
Who was more fair than she whom I should wed ?

MARY. I do.

GASTON. And how our talk was broken then ;
And how I came to seek you later ?

MARY.

Yes.

GASTON. Do you know why I came to seek you then ?

MARY. No, no, I cannot tell.

GASTON.

I loved you, Mary.

Only I came too late, and I was told

Of your betrothal to another man.

They told me too that you had loved him long.

I knew not that.

[MARY says nothing, but stares into the fire.

Enter SQUIRE.

SQUIRE. The Mummers are without.

MARY. What Mummers ?

SQUIRE. Christmas Mummers. They would fain
Come in, and sing a carol to my Lady.

Enter LORDS and LADIES and MUMMERS. Music.

MUMMERS sing.

And in the Garden that God made,
Beneath the tree with golden fruit,
Were Adam and his faëry bride ;
A serpent coiled about the root.

And Lilith, she was false to him,
And Adam put away his bride ;
God gave him Eve to be his wife,
Who loved him well until he died.

But Lilith could not die, for she
Was like the spirits of the air ;
She wandered o'er the wide wide world,
Nor could she slumber anywhere.

'Twas winter, snow lay on the earth,
One star alone lit up the sky
When Lilith to the Manger came,
And heard a cry, an Infant's cry.

And she went in to comfort it :
There, by the ox's stall, she found
A Mother and a Child new-born,
Amid the straw upon the ground.

The Infant shone like moonshine bright,
The yellow straw was bright as gold ;
And Lilith gave her silver cloak
To keep Him from the bitter cold.

The Infant smiled, and Lilith felt
A wish to lie down on the ground ;
Then she, who ne'er had slept, lay down
And slept ; and still she sleepeth sound.

MARY (*to* SQUIRE). Go, thank the Mummers for their minstrely.

SQUIRE. My Lady, in the Banquet Hall the Mummers Wish to present a Christmas Mystery ;
Will't please you to attend it ?

MARY. Presently,
Maybe I'll come. Should I not come, good-night.

GASTON. My Lady, come you to the Mystery ?

MARY. 'Tis close on midnight. I am weary, too,
And wish to slumber. No, I shall not come ;
Good-night, my Lord.

GASTON. Good-night, good-night to you.

[*Exeunt* GASTON and LORDS.]

ALICE. Go you to rest, my Lady—shall we wait ?

MARY. Nay, wait not—go to bed—I have no need
Of any one to-night. I'll watch awhile.

Good-night to you. *[Exeunt LADIES.]*

Yes, I must be alone.

[Walks towards the fire.]

It is not cold which makes me tremble thus.

[The clock strikes midnight ; bells ring.]

Midnight ! Already it is Christmas Day !

*[She walks to the image, which stands on the left
of the fireplace, and kneels.]*

My thoughts are tossed about like perished leaves ;

They shift like water, and like fire they burn ;

So thick, so fast they come, I scarce can utter ;

One thing I know : that I am sore afraid,

And that temptation wrestles with my soul ;

An unseen spirit, terrible and dark,

Whispers his subtle sayings in my ear.

I dare not gaze upon his hidden face

Lest I should love his face. Though I be deaf

To the dark words he whispers, I know well,

Deep in my heart, the speech is sweet to me—

Oh, help me, Mary, Mother ; I am frail,

Long since the solid bastions of my soul

Have been besieged by stealthy misery,

By Love, and all his million ministers.

And now, when he had lain so long in ambush

That I had deemed the danger past, he comes,

And, with a tenfold violence, renews

His fierce attack. Oh, help me, Mary, Queen ;

For, in my heart, I feel the swift desire

To yield, and live triumphant in defeat.

Oh, shield me from this grievous sin. Oh, help !

I am so weak. Now, when I speak to thee,

I am made strong ; yet when I cease to pray,

The powers of evil drag me down again
Into the dark delicious sea. Oh, hear !
Oh, help me in this hour of anguish, help !
O Thou Who, in the Garden, once didst pray
For strength to drink the bitter cup of death,
Hear me ; the cup I ask Thee to remove
Is one of rapture, not of bitterness ;
I ask : I call : I cry out from the depth
Of agony and anguish. Help me ! Help !

[Pause. She rises from her knees, and walks to the fire.]

How cold it is ! My heart is cold and dead.

[MARY walks to the door and remains a few moments by it listening in silence. She walks away, hesitating for a moment ; then she returns to the door, opens it softly, and calls softly,

Gaston !

Enter GASTON.

GASTON. Are you still here ?

MARY.

I am alone—

And shiver in my solitude ; I need
To speak a word with you, for I am sad ;
Your tale has made me sad.

GASTON.

'Tis womanlike,

And haply 'tis divine to shed sweet dew
Of pity upon those we cannot love.
I thank you for your pity.

MARY.

There is more,

Much more than pity in my sadness now.
You told your story, Gaston, for you said
'Twas haply the last time that we should speak,
Thus, open-hearted. I, too, think the same ;
So listen while I tell my story now.

GASTON. Have you a story, too ?

MARY. A foolish tale,
A woman's tale of weakness and despair ;
Yet the despair is strong as any man's.
[They sit down near the fire.]

MARY. I in a kingdom of wild woods was born
By sad, lamenting shores, among the trees
Of Broceliande, where Merlin lies asleep ;
And something of the whisper of those woods,
Some echo of the sadness of that sea
Stayed in my heart ; and, when I was baptized,
An aged crone stopped by the church and sang
That he whom I should truly wed should die.
Although I know it is but childish folly
To heed such omens, yet within my heart
The saying lingered, and it lingers still.
The years passed, and I came to Court : but yet
I was not as the others : though I grew,
I was a child at heart : I am a child.
I felt—I feel my childhood's old despair ;
My childhood's passion and wild waves of hate ;
And all my childhood's terror of the dark,
Of Death, of shadows, and the power of night,
And of the grave, the cold grave, dark with clay.

GASTON. 'Tis that which makes you sad ?

MARY. Nay, there is more.
The day I saw you riding to the Court,
I looked at you as I had never looked
On other men ; I thought we two had met
In the white meadows of a Paradise
Made but for us ; the world was blotted out ;
All other things were dead but you and me ;
And, in a flash, I knew that you were mine,
That I, of all mankind, should love but you.

I loved you, Gaston ; but you never spoke,
And when I reasoned with myself I said—
He is a heedless boy ; how can he love ?
Then came that fatal day. My husband first
With fiery words came pressing for my hand ;
And then you came. And once again I felt
That you were made for me, and I for you ;
I thought you loved me ; and I felt that soon
You must speak out your love. You went away,
But I stayed brooding : all my childish heart
Was beating with dark presage and alarm ;
I saw you walk across the yard, and, Gaston,
You seemed to me so radiant and so young,
Then, all at once, I saw you drenched with blood ;
And I the murderer and the red knife mine !
And in my ears were ringing the old words ;
And my soul cried : Oh, never shall this be !

GASTON. You loved me, Mary, then. It is not true.
For had you truly loved me, all these fears,
These sickly fantasies had fled afraid.

MARY. Most sure, had you come then and taken me
In your strong arms, I had forgotten all ;
You came not, but my husband came.

GASTON. I came
Too late.

MARY. Too late ; yet haply it was well ;
Maybe I should have caused thy death.

GASTON. Such words
Are folly : yet the fault was only mine,
I came too late ; but there is solace still.
You have found happiness, though I despair.

MARY. I happy, Gaston ? Look into my eyes ;
Look deep into my eyes ; say if you see
One little spark of joy ?

GASTON. You sorrowful ?

Then are we like two notes that wail and wander
And meet and make one chord of wild despair.

MARY. I think there cannot be in all the world
Two living souls as sad as thine and mine ;
For we are both so young : a colder blight
Than autumn's touches us.

GASTON. I feel it too—
As though each day I lived whole centuries
Of hopelessness. For me there is no time ;
An hour seems an Eternity. I feel
As the damned souls must feel in endless hell.

MARY. Our hell is here ; but wherefore, Gaston, why,
What have we done to merit punishment ?

GASTON. The fault was ours ; ourselves we wove the web.

MARY. No, no ; we could not help it ; it was Fate ;
But be it as it may, we are in hell.

GASTON. Then since we can be naught but two lost souls
Who meet in hell, shall we defy the flames,
And snatch the ecstasy from out the fire ?

MARY. I would defy the powers of Heaven now ;
I would dare dark, abominable things ;
No ! Gaston, no ; begone !

GASTON. No, Mary, no.

[*Taking her by her hands.*

It is too late. I will not go away ;
You can but bid me stay, for you know well
That now it is too late. See, Mary, see,
The Universe has melted like a dream,
Earth has dissolved, and in the starless space
There are but you and my eternal love ;
And now the world and its perplexities
And tangled schemes have dwindled into dust ;
Now there is no more life and no more death ;

silence when silence was helpful and face hardships with a buoyant heart.

They crossed the bridge and stopped before a pair of high folding-doors. They were the doors of the tavern. Wogan drew a breath of relief, pulled the bobbin and pushed the doors open. Clementina slipped through, and in darkness she took a step forward and bruised herself against the wheels of a carriage. Wogan closed the doors and ran to her side.

'This way,' said he, and held out his hand. He guided Clementina round the carriage to a steep, narrow stairway—it was more a ladder than a stair—fixed against the inner wall. At the top of this stairway shone a horizontal line of yellow light. Wogan led the Princess up the stairs. The line of light shone out beneath a door. Wogan opened the door and stood aside. Clementina passed into a small bare room lighted by a single candle, where Mrs. Misset, Gaydon, and O'Toole waited for her coming. Not a word was said, but their eyes spoke their admiration of the woman, their knees expressed their homage to the Queen. There was a fire blazing on the hearth, Mrs. Misset had a dry change of clothes ready and warm. Wogan laid the Princess's bundle on a chair and with Gaydon and O'Toole went down the stairs.

'The horses?' he asked.

'I have ordered them,' said Gaydon, 'at the post-house. I will fetch them,' and he hurried off upon his errand.

Wogan turned to O'Toole.

'And the bill?'

'I have paid it.'

'There is no one awake in the house?'

'No one but the landlady.'

ACT III

SCENE I

Hall, as in Act II. MARY, LADIES, SQUIRES.

MARY (*to LADIES*). Bring all the lights, I am quite ready
now ;
Soon the guests will be here.

Enter GASTON.

My Lord, the first
Of guests you come. [*Exit WOMEN.*]
O Gaston, comfort me,
I am afraid.

GASTON. Upon a mighty river
We two are borne ; we cannot stem the tide.

MARY. 'Tis true the whole world is awry ; but we
Are not the authors of the wide world's wrong.
Yet comfort me, for I am sore afraid.

GASTON. We two, together, to Fate's chariot
Are bound, but let us breathe the ecstasy.
We wandered in the night ; by chance we found
A rushing fire of love, let us be glad
A moment by that flame. [*Noise of people is heard.*]

MARY. It is the guests.

*Enter ALBERTUS MIRANDOLA, BAYART, LA PALISSE,
LOYS D'ARS ; other LORDS and LADIES.*

[*MUSICIANS play in the gallery.*]

MARY. I crave your pardon for my husband's absence,

But, as you know, he started for Bologna
Some days ago, with a small Company :
I bid you welcome all.

BAYART. Oh, gentle lady,
We, too, shall join your husband on the field
Of battle.

MARY. Will there be a battle soon ?

BAYART. The Duke awaits dispatches from the King ;
Daily the Spaniards and the host of Naples
Are marshalling their forces, therefore, we
Must fight, and in one battle end the war.

MARY. But will this mighty battle soon be fought ?

BAYART. Our Companies are ready to set out
At any hour. Some weeks may well pass by
Before we meet the Spaniards ; on the road
There will be fighting and sharp skirmishes ;
But as to when the battle will be fought,
The Astrologer may tell you ; but not I.

MARY. The Astrologer ?

MIRANDOLA. I have brought with me here
A Minstrel, who can sing the songs of France ;
And an Astrologer, of whom they tell
Marvellous things ; for he, they say, can read
The past and future as an open book.

GASTON. Where is the sage ? Come, let us test his skill.
[SOOTHSAYER comes forward.]

MARY. Can you foretell the future, Sir ?

SOOTHSAYER. I read
The language of the stars and of men's eyes.

GASTON. Sir, can you tell us if the Spanish host
And King of Naples mean to give us battle ?

SOOTHSAYER. Yes, by the Mass ! a battle shall be fought ;
I see a plain green with the growing corn,
And strewn with fallen blossom and spring flowers ;

The sun shines joyously upon that plain,
And the larks sing above it ; but the corn
Is scarlet, not from any poppy flower
Or red anemone, but with warm blood ;
And in the grass the gallant Frenchmen lie,
The young, who went so joyous to the war.
Of those who started, few shall see their homes,
And few shall see the sun set on that field.

GASTON. But who shall win ?

SOOTHSAYER. The French shall take the camp ;
But there shall be no note of joy when sounds
The Song of Victory at set of sun.
There shall be tears, and mournful, muffled sounds.
At set of sun that battlefield shall be
Like a fresh sword of snow-white mountain lilies
That has been ravaged by a storm of hail ;
That night the old and weary still shall watch ;
The young, the brave, shall sleep the whole night through.

BAYART (*laughing*). In every battle many a man must die.

GASTON. And many a youth. I pray you, gentle Bayart,
To ask your fate.

BAYART. My friend, it is in vain ;
I know there's nothing great in store for me ;
But since you wish it——

(*To SOOTHSAYER.*) Tell me, Sir, shall I
Become one day a great and wealthy man ?

SOOTHSAYER. Thou shalt be rich in valour and in merit ;
But thy reward shall be thy deathless fame ;
Thy prize shall be no earthly crown of gold,
But the unfading laurel leaves of glory.
As long as men are born to fight and die,
Thy name shall live, and where men meet to fight,
Thy name, more than the trumpet or the drum,
Shall stir their hearts ; and when they face their death,

Thy name shall make that dreadful minute calm.

Amidst the sordid refuse of the world

Thy memory shall flourish like a flower,

The stainless lily of the fields of blood ;

And in all time the fragrance of that flower

Shall rise into the nostrils of the brave,

And sweeten bitter death to dying men—

O knight, made of pure gold without alloy !

BAYART. Forbear this foolish praise ; but say, the battle
Shall I outlive it ?

SOOTHSAYER. In another war,
Now twelve years hence, in battle thou shalt fall.

MARY. I fain would ask my fortune.

(To LORDS.) Listen not ;

It irks me that all men should hear.

[LORDS and LADIES *withdraw and break up in groups.*

(*Pointing to GASTON.*) Sir, tell me

The fortune of that goodly nobleman—

The Duke of Nemours.

[GASTON *hears his name and listens.*

SOOTHSAYER.

Great is your regard,

As that of all this Company, for him.

And well does he deserve it, for his face

Betrays the secret of a noble soul.

His fate is overshadowed by a cloud,

And sounds of twilight echo in his name.

[*Continuing in a kind of chant.*

For him a peril lies in wait,

But his own hands shall hold his fate.

For if he shun the danger, he

Shall have no peer in history.

If when the sun in blood shall rise,

He sees upon that day, the skies,

Twice bathed in blood, at eve grow dim,
There shall be no more hurt for him.
He shall be far from peril's way
At sunset, on the Holy Day.

GASTON. What is it that you speak ?

MARY. Naught save this word—
That you shall prove a monarch among men.
[SOOTHSAYER *withdraws*.

GASTON. I heard it all. So there shall be a choice
Between the greatest honours of the world
And Death.

MARY. This man, like every other man
Who knows you, has foretold high things for you.

GASTON. I feel as though my fate were calling me
From some dim region far beyond the skies.

MARY. Hush ! they will hear you.

GASTON. No, too busy they
With talk and song to pay us any heed.

MARY. He said the choice is yours to live or die,
And living, to become the King of Men.
Live, then, you must.

GASTON. The Soothsayer meant, I know,
That I should be brief-fated.

MARY. No, for me
And for your Country's sake you must live on.
I cannot know you dead and face the world ;
And happiness perchance will come to you
Some day when you are gone, when memory
Of me is but a dream. You must not think
That I am aught of import in your life.
You will forget me, and I shall not grieve
So long as I remember you, and know
That you are living still, and, if God please,

Are happy somewhere. No, I shall not grieve.
I am a petal cast upon your path ;
Your life is not begun ; these threatening signs
Are mists of dawn, that, rising, shall unveil
The stainless azure of a firmament,
Lit by one star.

GASTON. That star whereof you speak
Already burns too swift, and will flare out.
For even in the moments of my joy
A ghostly call has echoed in my heart ;
And, like a pilgrim in a hall of feasts,
I longed to go and seek the lonely way.

MARY. Fate has dealt blindly with us. Fate decreed
Before the world that you and I should love.
My only thought is for your future years.

GASTON. My future years ? Oh, far away and still
I see those future years. For I can hear
A rushing tide that carries me along.
I cannot stop. You must not bid me stay.
For I am like a horse who hears his hoofs
Echoing like thunder on the frosty road,
And maddened with that sound, he only knows
That nothing shall arrest his fatal speed.

Enter SOLDIER with letters.

SOLDIER. I bring dispatches from the King of France.

[GASTON *takes them and reads.*]

MARY. What news ?

GASTON. The King frets at the long delay ;
He bids me drive the Spaniards from the land,
He tells me to give battle now.

(*To MESSENGER.*) 'Tis well.

(*Calling to BAYART.*) My Lord of Bayart, letters from the
King

Have come to me ; he frets at our delay ;
To-morrow we must push against the foe.
To-morrow at the latest. Come, my Lord,
Let us take counsel with our friends awhile.
(*To SOLDIERS.*) And bid the soldiers of our company
To be prepared to start at any time.

(*Walks into the next room with BAYART. MARY
goes to the door and calls GASTON.*)

MARY. Pray the Astrologer to speak with me.

Enter SOOTHSAYER.

MARY. You told me Bayart's fate and Nemours' fate,
But, Sir, of me you said no word at all.

SOOTHSAYER. Let me look in your eyes.

[*He looks into her eyes.*]

SOOTHSAYER.

I see a field,

A wintry field that lies beneath the stars,
I know not if 'tis winter or the spring ;
It may be spring ; and there upon the ground,
I see a warrior lying drenched with blood.
And, kneeling there beside him, is a form
That weeps and wrings her hands, and it is you.

MARY. Can you not recognise his face ?

SOOTHSAYER.

I see

His splendid armour and his gory wounds—
I cannot see his face.

MARY.

This field of Death

You see, is that my only destiny ?

SOOTHSAYER. Yes, that is all ; that shines like a red star
Over thy life ; and all the rest is tears.

MARY. Shall I die young ?

SOOTHSAYER.

I know not ; if you live

It shall be but to pray with tears to God.

MARY. Why shall I pray and weep ?

SOOTHSAYER. We must all pray
To God that He forgive our trespasses.
MARY. And Gaston, the young Duke of Nemours ; tell,
Shall he die in the battle which shall be ?

SOOTHSAYER. For him a peril lies in wait,
But his own hands shall hold his fate.
For if he shun the peril, he
Shall have no peer in history.

Enter BAYART.

BAYART. My Lady, the King presses us to fight.
So we must start ere many hours are past.
I pray you ask Mirandola's gay Minstrel
To sing to us a song.

MARY. Yes, bid him sing.

BAYART. Some joyous song that fits our merry mood.

MINSTREL. I fear my song will not be glad enough
To fit this merry laughing company.
This is a song I learned at the French Court :

Song.

*I do not bid thee linger here,
The lark sings in the sky ;
So bid farewell without a tear,
Begone, without a sigh.
Thy way is parted from my way,
We'll meet not till the Judgment Day.*

*The summer day is hot and long,
Yet it shall fade away ;
Evening shall come, and twilight song
After the summer day ;
And night—the night which bringeth sleep
To all who wander and who weep.*

MARY. Stop, bid the minstrels play a merry tune.

[MINSTRELS *play*. *A roll of drums is heard outside.*

MARY. Hark ! what is that ?

BAYART. News of the enemy.

[*A tramp of men and a noise of voices is heard.*

Enter SOLDIER.

BAYART. It is a man of François' company.

MARY. What news ? What news, say ? Letters from my Lord ?

SOLDIER. News do I bring, my Lady, but no letters.

MARY. What news ? Speak on.

SOLDIER. My Lady, no good news.

MARY. Has he been taken by the enemy ?

SOLDIER. I would fain tell it to my Lord of Bayart, Or to the Duke.

MARY. Nay, thou shalt tell it me ;
Haste thee, I say !

SOLDIER. My Lady, no good news
I bring.

MARY. Speak, is he wounded ?

SOLDIER. He received
A mortal wound——

MARY. Oh, speak ! Where is he ? Say !
Where is he ? Speak !

SOLDIER. Within Bologna town——

MARY. Is he still living ?

SOLDIER. He is sleeping now ;
And the leech says his wound can never heal.

MARY. He is dead ! Speak, is he dead ?

SOLDIER. I fear 'tis true.

[*MARY falls into a chair with a cry.*

MARY (*rising*). Here, soldier, come. I will hear all. Come,
tell me

How died he ?

[*The guests withdraw, all except GASTON, BAYART, and MIRANDOLA.*

SOLDIER. We had gone from hence five days,
And came upon a body of the foe—
Venetian skirmishers—before we reached
Bologna ; these we set upon and routed,
But in the fight my Lord received a wound.
We bore him to the town and bade the leeches
Succour him ; but already it was late.
Yet, at one time, my Lord seemed to gain strength,
Called me, and bade me heed his words, and take
This message to my Lady—" It is death,"
He said, " and tell the Duke how it befell ;
And, to my Lady, say my dying thoughts
Have sent a prayer to Heaven for her sake.
I have asked God to guard her in the world,
And give her happiness and plenteous years.
Moreover, tell my friend, the Duke of Nemours,
That, after my dear wife, 'twas him I loved
More than all men ; and had I thought my death
Could give him longer life, or brighter fortune,
Then gladly had I died." And once again
He raised himself, 'twas soon before he died,
And said, " God bless my Mary, she's alone."
And then he spake no more.

MARY. Where lies my Lord ?

SOLDIER. There, where we left him, in Bologna town.
And for the Duke of Nemours I have news.

GASTON. Speak on.

SOLDIER. The town of Brescia has suffered siege,
And fallen into the hands of the Venetians ;
It cries for swift relief. They cannot last
Another day.

GASTON (*to* BAYART). We must set out to-night.

BAYART. This selfsame moment. All has been prepared.

(*To* SOLDIER.) Go, tell our men-at-arms that we set out.

(*To* GASTON.) Come, Sir, for we must start without delay.

Let us leave Lady Mary to her grief ;

We will not trouble her with our farewells,

Nor vex her with civilities ; our men

Await us ready. Come, 'tis time to go.

[MARY looks up and stares at them as they walk out—GASTON does not look at her—they pass out in silence.]

SCENE II

A part of the battlefield of Ravenna ; on the right there is a clump of trees ; on the left the plain is seen—trees and rocks in the foreground. In the distance is heard an intermittent murmur of battle, growing fainter and fainter ; clouds of smoke are seen rising on the horizon of the plain. A few SOLDIERS discovered sitting on the ground ; it is afternoon.

FIRST SOLDIER. It is too late to chase the flying foe.

SECOND SOLDIER. Ay, for the victory is ours. This morning

The rising sun seemed to be dyed in blood.

Some said it was an omen of defeat.

But now the plain is drenched with alien blood.

FIRST SOLDIER. Our company was loth to go to battle,

But Gaston came and stirred our sluggish hearts

With words of fire.

[*Sounds of trumpets are heard.*]

SECOND SOLDIER. Hark ! hark ! it is our men.

[*SOLDIERS jump up and run off. A noise of clashing steel is heard, and trumpets again sound. Behind the trees, banners and lances and the heads of soldiers are descried.*]

Enter GASTON DE FOIX, stained with blood, and other
SOLDIERS. Enter BAYART from the other side.

BAYART (*going up to GASTON*). Sir, you are wounded ?

GASTON. No, I have no wound.

BAYART. Oh, Heaven be praised ! for thou hast won the
battle,

From this day forth thou art, and shalt remain,

The greatest captain of the world ; but now

Press on no more, assemble here thy men ;

As yet, the time of pillage is not come.

I and the Captain Loys will pursue

The fugitives. Now, for the sake of God,

Stir not from here until we send for thee.

GASTON. Sir, I will stay in safety till you come.

[*Exit BAYART.*

GASTON. Is this the end ? And is the battle won ?

Not many moments since the seething fight

Deafened and dazzled me ; the spacious plain

Was like a sea of blood that cried and moaned ;

And I was happy on that desperate ocean.

The country smiles with that strange quietness

Which only seems to come on Holy Days ;

The plain is white with blossom. It is spring.

Is this a battlefield ? And has there been

A fight to-day ? Or have I dreamed a dream ?

The blood upon my armour is no dream—

Oh, there was peace within that shrieking battle ;

Now it is gone, and in this quiet sight

There is not any peace.

[*GASTON walks to the right, plunged in thought.*

*He is hidden by the trees. Once more men
are seen, and a faint noise of arriving people
is heard. GASTON does not notice them.*

Enter MARY with small SUITE.

MARY. He is not here.

(*To SUITE.*) Here leave me ; go and strive to find some food
And water for the horses. [*Exit SUITE.*]

MARY. It is over ;
The battle's done, I cannot hear a sound.
But Gaston, where is he ? He is not here.
The prophecy is true, and he is dead.
But yet the Soothsayer said if he outlived
The day on which the sun seemed dyed in blood
All would be well. He must have meant Good Friday :
To-day is Easter.

[*GASTON appears through the trees. MARY sees*
GASTON.

MARY. Gaston ! It is I !

[*GASTON walks sadly towards her.*

The battle's over and you are not dead ;
Oh, praised be God !

GASTON. The sun has not yet set.

MARY. What have I done ? What have I said amiss ?
I can but let my joy soar up to God,
My thanks, my praise.

GASTON. Although I am not dead
Yet have I told Death of a trysting-place :
He will not fail to meet me when I come.

MARY. The battle's done. It is too late to go.

[*In the distance a faint noise of trumpets is heard.*

GASTON looks at MARY.

MARY. No, no ! I will not let you leave me now.

GASTON. Just now in the loud battle, while I fought
Between the spears I saw the face of Death ;
Then twilight seemed to brood upon the battle ;
Above, amid the dimness and the hush,

The face of Death shone like the silent snow.
O Mary ! very glorious was that face,
And, for one moment, peace was in my soul,
And I was one with all calm sleeping things ;
And then I heard a voice which filled the skies,
Which called me by my name and bade me come
Unto a kingdom of divine strange light—
Therefore, since Death has called me, I must go ;
Nor fail to meet him at the trysting-place.

MARY. You have not, then, one little thought for me ?
You shall not go. See, see these burning tears !
These are the tears of joy to know you living !
O Gaston ! wherefore must you go to die,
Since your life has been spared ?

GASTON. My task is done,
And Death has need of me. The time has come.
To-day he meets me at the trysting-place.

MARY. Not yet, not yet ! O Gaston, give me time.
Death cannot now have need of you. The call
Is surely but a dream. The Soothsayer said
A danger threatened, but that you might pass
Through peril into fame. Then, far from me,
Fate shall uplift you in a cloud of fire,
Above the world. I told you long ago
That I was naught of import in your life ;
Farewell ;—but should I never see you more,
The echoes of your fame shall bring me joy ;
As long as in the starless sky your star
Still shines, my darkness will be full of light. [Kneels.
Upon my knees I pray you not to die.

GASTON. There is an inward flame without whose light
No life can be, no deeds of fame be done.
I had a portion of that fire ; but now
Death has for ever cooled it with his hand.

I hear a bell. I know the time has come
To meet Death at the crossing of the roads.

MARY. Thou who wast born to be the King of Men !

GASTON. I can no longer speak the words of power ;
Beyond the world I seek the cool, dark air.

MARY. Why should you yield to Death ? See, I am yours ;
Lift me up on your chariot of fire,
And I will share the fame that you have won ;
And we will turn the world's reproach to glory.

GASTON. Mary, it is too late for all such thoughts.
It is too late. My share of glory shone
To-day. My life has traced its fiery orbit,
And, as a meteor, falls into the night.
And yet, when I shall sink beyond the day,
I dream I shall not find the darkness there,
But twilight lustrous without star or moon.
My soul shall fly back to its ancient home,
And, when you feel the hush of dawn or eve,
Then you will say that Gaston, whom you loved,
Is sleeping somewhere on untrodden hills,
Beyond the sun.

MARY. So be it ; let us die.

Enter SOLDIERS.

SOLDIERS. My Lord, some Spaniards rally to the fight
Beyond the trees, hard by the running stream.

GASTON (*to MARY*). See ! Death has called me to the
trysting-place !

(*To SOLDIERS.*) Many or few ?

SOLDIERS. At least a hundred men
Are there.

GASTON. And we have here a score of followers ;
Come, let us to the fight, nor heed their numbers !
(*To MARY.*) Good-bye ! Good-bye ! There is no more to say.

[*Exit GASTON. MARY watches him go, and gazes for some time at him through the trees ; the sun is sinking.*

MARY. A happy light is round him, the calm crown
Of Death seems to descend upon his head.
He stands revealed, a spirit of the light ;
I seem to hear a voice which cries : " This flower,
Drenched with the silver dew of Death's cool trees,
And glittering with the golden dust that lies
On Lethe's shore, this flower grows in the field
Where winter is not, and no sickle comes.
This spirit joins the company of those
Whose myriad voices make a single song."
(*Kneeling.*) O God ! grant Gaston what his heart desires ;
Give him the peace he found not on the earth—
The stillness that is nowhere in the world ;
Receive him into Thy tranquillity.
God, in this battle, let him die to-day.

[*MARY sinks down on the rocks. The sun shines red through the trees. Bells are ringing in the distance.*

MARY. The Angelus ! The blood-red sun has set.
It is no noise of bells, it is the battle !
I hear the sound of swords ; I see the steel ;
Gaston is fighting on the field of death ;
Oh, see, the blood is pouring from his wounds !
Gaston, I see thee, and thy face is bright,
And shining with the glory of a god ;
And, brighter still, a stranger now has come
To welcome thee. It is the trysting-place.

Enter BAYART and SOLDIERS on both sides.

BAYART. O Lady ! Wherefore are you here in peril
Upon the battlefield ?

MARY (*gazing wildly at him*). In peril? I?
Is this a battlefield? I know not, Sir,
For I have journeyed far, and I am weary.

BAYART. Where is the Duke of Nemours?

MARY.

He is dead.

Know you not? It is vain to seek him here.

Enter SOLDIERS, bearing the corpse of GASTON.

MARY. You see, I spoke the truth, and he is dead.
'Tis well. Give thanks to God, for it is well;
And he is happy in the land of light;
Happy and quiet. Wake him not, for he
Is sleeping with the slumber of a child;
Demophöon, born on the earth anew,
And cheated of thy immortality,
Asleep in unearthly fire again!

BAYART. She is distraught. Alas! O misery!
Gaston! O Gaston! How did this befall?

SOLDIER. My Lord, the Duke of Nemours sought the
Spaniards
Who rallied by the stream, with fourteen followers;
The Spaniards numbered nigh twelve hundred men;
And there the Duke fought like the god of War,
Like Roland at Roncesvalles, and held his own,
Slaying a mighty number of the foe,
Until at last, hemmed in on every side,
And set upon by overwhelming numbers,
Still fighting to his latest breath, he fell.

[MARY *kneels down by the corpse*.

BAYART (*kneeling down by GASTON'S corpse*). Oh, now the
battle has been lost again;
O Gaston! hadst thou lived there was no Prince
Who had come near what thou wast born to be.
Thy country, Gaston, mourns for thee; and I

Shall live my life in melancholy now,
For I have lost more than my tongue can tell.

[*Other SOLDIERS arrive.*

BAYART (*to SOLDIERS*). All you take off your helmets,
bare your heads ;
Your Prince is dead. Salute the noblest man
Of France and of the world, who here lies low.
Bring honour. In the loveliness of youth
Gaston has now assumed the majesty
Of Death, and entered into deathless fame.
Our Prince has fallen.

DUSK

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

*Io son, cantava, io son dolce sirena,
Che i marinari in mezzo il mar dismago :*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

YVAIN THE STRONG.

PERIDURE.

JASON.

SINTRAM.

ROBIN.

JESSAMINE.

MEADOW-SWEET. (*Jessamine's Maiden.*)

LOOSESTRIFE. (*Water Spirit.*)

YOLANDE. (*Jessamine's Maiden.*)

THE QUEEN OF THE WATER SPIRITS.

WATER SPIRITS, MEN-AT-ARMS, KNIGHTS, LADIES.

PROLOGUE, UNDERNEATH THE LAKE.

ACT I., A FOREST BY THE LAKE.

ACT II., HALL IN PERIDURE'S CASTLE.

ACT III., JESSAMINE'S GARDEN.

ACT IV., JESSAMINE'S GARDEN.

PROLOGUE

*Under the lake. THE QUEEN OF THE WATER SPIRITS is
discovered sitting on a throne.*

FIRST SPIRIT. The rippling surface of the lake grows still.

SECOND SPIRIT. The reeds no longer rustle in the wind.

FIRST SPIRIT. The violet haze of twilight dies away
On earthly hills ; the everlasting dusk
Grows dimmer, as the earthly sky grows dark.

QUEEN. I feel the first rays of the rising moon ;
Come, let us seek the surface of the lake
And wander with the Spirits of the Air.

Enter JESSAMINE.

JESSAMINE. O Queen, give ear unto my wretched tale

QUEEN. Are you already weary of the world ?
Seek you once more the everlasting dusk ?

JESSAMINE. Deride me if you will, but hear my tale.
Queen, when I left my watery home to seek
The world of men, and test the power of spells,
You said my birthright would be mine, so long
I yielded not to kiss of mortal man.
Queen, when I wandered through the singing world,
Amid the happy fields and flowers of spring,
And saw that all the creatures of the world
Obeyed me, I forgot the warning words,
And having proved my power on beast and bird,
I could not rest till I had tried to charm
A mortal man. I met a wandering knight ;

I lured him with strange song and subtle speech,
And he grew mad, and, Queen, I know not how,
I know not why, I yielded to his kiss.

QUEEN. Ill-starred, unhappy child ! for you have lost
The spirit's birthright, and yet have not won
The thoughtless happiness of mortals, though
A mortal now.

JESSAMINE. Ah, woe ! Ah, misery !
The bitterness, the anger, and the shame !
Though all the hidden spirits of the earth
Obeyed me, yet the essence of my might
Had fled ; for I, the unearthly flower of dusk,
Must needs submit unto a mortal man.
He bade me be his bride, his Queen, and I
Was forced to bow to his imperious will,
And suffer the great horror of his love ;
And though I now devise unnumbered spells,
I cannot rid me of his hateful sway.
O Queen, have pity ! free me from this shame,
I cannot bear this festering stain ; it stings
To madness, and consumes my heart with fire.

QUEEN. But though a mortal you shall still have power
Upon the spirits and the sons of earth.

JESSAMINE. O Queen, that is the bitterest thing of all !
I still retain my old divinity ;
All creatures of the world, all other men
Bow to me ; he unconquered keeps his sway.
Oh, great my folly ! Sweet had been the life
Upon that world, with every man my slave ;
But I no longer find delight in power ;
I am shamed and slighted, mad with bitter grief ;
Queen, from this hateful bondage set me free !

QUEEN. Deathless and free you might have lived on earth ;
But since you have yielded to the mortal law,

You must fulfil it to the very end,
Ere you escape to immortality.
There lives a man, a mortal, yet more great
And mightier than the heroes of the world ;
He knows not fear, but his the wistfulness
And wonder of the children of the woods.
To him the thrush and nightingale pay heed,
And the wolf follows harmless at his heels.
His wrath is like the lightning, and his strength
Stronger than all the billows of the sea.

JESSAMINE. Yet, Queen, this lord of mine is even as he
In strength and splendour, and the mortals say
He is the King of Knights.

QUEEN. Yet he to mine
Is as the glow-worm to the golden sun.
My knight, the man through whom you must be saved,
Is glorious with the might and mystery,
Which once the old gods of the Woodland knew.
And if you win his love you shall be saved ;
And you, according to the earthly law,
Must give your love to him, then you and he,
Released for ever from the mortal chain,
Deathless, shall live in might and mystery,
Upon the world.

JESSAMINE. I thank you, mighty Queen.
Oh, let me haste to find this son of strength.

[Exit JESSAMINE.]

QUEEN. She seeks the world of men ! Ah ! wiser far
To linger in the emerald haunts of dusk,
To dream among the cool and silent deeps,
And caverns of soft flowers ; only to seek
The world when skies are dark and spirits roam,
And not to face the cruel light of day.

ACT I

*A forest : through the trees a lake is seen, and, in the distance,
a castle on an island.*

Enter YVAIN and SQUIRE.

SQUIRE. Is this, perchance, the castle that we seek,
These towers that rise upon the lake's green isle ?

YVAIN. Beyond the violet hills our city lies,
The City of the Beryl ; we have strayed ;
This forest has no end ; here let us rest.

SQUIRE. I see a damsel coming through the glade.

Enter YOLANDE.

YVAIN. Lady, we fain would ask a word of guidance.
In this dark forest we have lost our way ;
I fain would know who owns these green domains,
These woods, this lake, these distant castle walls.

YOLANDE. Sir Peridure is lord of all these lands ;
The castle rising yonder on the lake,
His home.

YVAIN. I know not who is Peridure.

YOLANDE. From distant lands, O Stranger, have you
come ?

Sir Peridure is famed throughout the world
For deeds of might ; yet, if you know not him,
You will have heard of his fair lady ?

YVAIN. No.

YOLANDE. The Princess Jessamine ?

YVAIN. I know her not ;
Pray tell me of her. Is she then so fair ?

YOLANDE. I am Yolande, a maiden at her Court,
And we have never thought if she be fair ;
But this I surely know, if you should see her,
You never more will wander from these woods.

YVAIN. You mock me ; but she must be passing fair.

YOLANDE. I know not—I have seen more fair than she,
And Queens more splendid and more proud ; but she
Has something that the fairest lack. Perchance
It is the starry sadness of her eyes,
Or haply the glad ripple of her laugh,
Or the pale texture of her piteous face ;
I know not ; but she breathes a subtle spell
That clings and creeps about the hearts of men,
Like the faint fragrance of the jessamine,
Her flower ; and more, it seems as though she charmed
All nature, for the wild bees heed her voice,
The swallows circle round her lifted hands,
And silver fishes swim towards her feet ;
And when her step is heard upon the grass,
The muttering forest, and the humming fields
Are still.

YVAIN. My heart is in the violet hills,
And cannot be assailed by any spell.

YOLANDE. So often have I heard these very words ;
But look around you. Ask of Roland, Jason,
Ozan, and Modred, Sintram.

YVAIN. Who are these ?

YOLANDE. To some Death brought an end of their
despair,
And some distracted wander ; others here
Hover around her like unhappy ghosts ;
But all have said good-bye to life and joy

And all now live as in a misty dream.
He who was once a knight forgets the sword,
And the wild hunter heeds the horn no more.

YVAIN. Though the whole world submit unto her spell
I shall not bow to it, for in my heart
There is a mightier magic. Fare you well,
Fair Lady, and I thank you ; we shall rest
Awhile beneath these trees.

YOLANDE. Farewell, Yvain,
Yet heed my warning word, and haste away
Before you have set eyes on Jessamine.

YVAIN. Farewell, I have no fear. [Exit YOLANDE.
(To SQUIRE.) Here let us rest
Our limbs in the cool shade.

[YVAIN and SQUIRE withdraw into the underwood.

Enter JESSAMINE and MEADOW-SWEET.

JESSAMINE. He should be here—
Two nights ago I muttered magic words
And since that hour he wanders in a maze.

MEADOW-SWEET. Is he a spirit of the streams or woods ?
For never have you sought a mortal man
Before.

JESSAMINE. He is a mortal like Ozan,
Roland, and Modred, Sintram, Peridure—
O Meadow-Sweet, I needs must seek this man ;
You do not know the nature of the chain
That binds me.

MEADOW-SWEET. Sister, I can see no chain ;
The knights, like slaves, fulfil your fantasies ;
The spirits of the water heed your voice ;
Your life is strange with light and melody,
Such days are brighter than the deathless dusk
Beneath the lake.

JESSAMINE. You cannot understand,
You are all spirit, you have never felt
The heavy burden of the mortal law ;
But I am bound and yearn for liberty.

MEADOW-SWEET. Ah ! See the glistening of a coat of mail !
[Runs to the underwood.

A knight beneath the hawthorn lies asleep.

JESSAMINE. 'Tis he. Now must I wake him with a song.
[JESSAMINE sings.

*Oh, wherefore is the world so grey ?
And why is the sweet sunshine dark ?
And scentless the white flower of May,
And sad the singing of the lark ?
Oh, vanished is the happy gleam !
My life is darkened by a dream.*

*So long ago, in lands so far,
That fitful hour of summer night ;
The face that trembled like a star,
The footfall swift as swallows' flight ;
I thought that when the fireflies fled
The dream would be already dead.*

*The starry face flits through the trees,
The swift soft footfall skims the ground ;
And deep around me spread the seas
Of darkness tremulous with sound ;
The fireflies weave their silver net . . .
O dream, fly hence ! Let me forget !*

JESSAMINE. Yvain ! the horn is calling in the woods ;
Yvain ! the sun has dried the dripping leaves ;
Wake, wake, Yvain, the strong, the fiery-eyed,
For Jessamine is here and waits for you.

Enter YVAIN.

YVAIN. I dreamed I heard a voice that called my name.

JESSAMINE. A knight ! Ah ! doubtless he has lost his way.
(*To YVAIN.*) Sir, need you guidance ? for these woodlands
here

Are like a perilous maze.

YVAIN. Fair Lady, I
Am bound for the violet hills.

JESSAMINE. Ah ! that is where
The lovely Princess Beryl dwells.

YVAIN. I go
To seek her. She is my betrothed.

JESSAMINE. 'Tis meet
That you, the noblest of the sons of men,
Should win the fairest woman of the world.

YVAIN. Lady, you must mistake me for another ;
I am a wandering knight—a forest child.

JESSAMINE. 'Tis strange, I took you for Yvain the Strong,
The Fiery-eyed.

YVAIN. 'Tis true I am Yvain.

JESSAMINE. Yvain the Strong ! the echoes of his deeds
Rolled through this woodland kingdom long ago.

YVAIN. What claim have I to glory ? Speak.

JESSAMINE. Yvain !
Wherefore do men thus name you then the Strong ?

YVAIN. I to the mercy of the beasts was left
When but an infant ; and I know not now
Who were my parents ; thus in ancient woods,
Fostered by beasts and brother to the birds,
I grew, and when I came to be a man
This life had hardened me and made me strong.
But, Lady, does the Princess Jessamine
Walk in these woods ?

JESSAMINE. So you of Jessamine
Have heard ; Yvain, I am that Jessamine ;
My lord is Peridure ; beside the lake
We dwell, and though you seek the violet hills
To win the fairest woman of the world,
Despise not me.

YVAIN. I harboured no such thought.

JESSAMINE. Nay, for I know your thoughts are far away ;
Yet heed me : ever since your echoing fame
Reached this green kingdom, greatly have I longed
To see you ; tarry with us for a day,
And we will gallop over the deep grass
And wake the moonlit woods with horn and song ;
And we will hold a glittering tournament,
Where you, the victor, shall be crowned by me.
Tarry a day with us—one swift, glad day—
And you shall hear upon the emerald lake
Such melody as you have never heard ;
And crowned with fame that you shall win with us,
The conqueror of our unconquered knights,
You shall go glorious to the violet hills.

YVAIN. Lady, I cannot tarry ; I must go.

JESSAMINE. Heed, heed, Yvain ! it is a woman's whim ;
'Tis meet that the most strong should sometimes yield
To the most frail. O peerless, great Yvain,
I fain would have you humble the proud knights
Who dwell with us. After the hour of combat
A dreamy song upon the rippling lake
Should lull you. I have made this green domain
A haunt of echoes and wild melody ;
Shall not I show it to Yvain the Strong ?

YVAIN. Great is the honour, yet I must not stay.

JESSAMINE. Yvain, have pity ; in the glittering throng
Of idle knights who swarm about us here,

There is not one brave man ; in the bright crowd
I have been lonely and am oft-times sad ;
It is a goodly thing to see a man.

YVAIN. Lady, I thank you with a humble heart ;
Lost in this wood, already have I lingered
Three days ; and now I needs must hasten on ;
I thank you, and I bid farewell to you.

(To SQUIRE.) Come, youth, 'tis time to start. Farewell,
farewell. [Exit YVAIN.

JESSAMINE. Meadow-Sweet ! He has gone, he heeded
not,

Although I filled the air with silent song,
And wove an invisible net of clinging beams.
Haste you, and bid the spirits of the trees
To lead him wandering round and round the lake.

MEADOW-SWEET. O sisters of the rustling shady leaves,
Blind great Yvain with fairy drops of dew,
Lead him astray.

JESSAMINE. What think you of Yvain ?
He is another Peridure, more strong,
More fair, perchance, and yet in all the same ;
No, I shall never love you, Lord Yvain,
But you shall love me, and obey my will,
And set me free. Now listen to my song.

[Sings.

*Mine eyes are dim and my wound is sore,
White sail, will you come to me ?
My Friend, shall I never see you more ?
Be still, O moaning sea.*

*Have you forgotten the cup of bliss ?
White sail, will you come to me ?
On the flying ship, and the first long kiss ?
Be still, O moaning sea.*

*Have you forgotten the forest trees ?
White sail, will you come to me ?
The vows we spoke to the stars and seas ?
Be still, O moaning sea.*

*I sought you once in a strange disguise ;
White sail, will you come to me ?
You knew not even my sad, sad eyes ;
Be still, O moaning sea.*

*" Call when you will, I'll come," you said ;
White sail, will you come to me ?
Come swiftly, or you will find me dead ;
Be still, O moaning sea.*

*The sail is black, they have hauled it high ;
White sail, you came not to me ;
I'll turn my face to the wall and die ;
Be still, O moaning sea.*

*O Iseult, my life, my death, my friend !
White sail, there's no need for thee ;
I waited for you until the end . . .
Still is the moaning sea.*

JESSAMINE. He heeds me not, but wanders by the lake ;
Come, Meadow-Sweet, upon our glittering skiff
We to the sound of many flutes will sail,
And lure this rebel unto us at last.

[JESSAMINE and MEADOW-SWEET embark in their
boat. Music. Between the trees the boat
is half seen floating among the reeds ; a gust
of wind catches in the sail : JESSAMINE'S
voice is heard, crying—

Help ! Save me ! Save me ! Help ! I drown, I die !
[Pause.]

YVAIN *enters carrying JESSAMINE in his arms ; she is dripping with water and covered with weeds.*

YVAIN. She does not stir, her eyes are closed, her face
Is white with deathly pallor, and she lies
So frail upon my arms, a sleeping flower—
Surely too frail for mortal scythe to mow—
The ghost of some dead lily of the valley.
It cannot be that she is dead ! Awake !
Wake, lovely Jessamine ! You are too fair
To wander in the sunless halls of Death.
Alas ! she will not wake, the frailest flower
Of all the world has been untimely mown.

[JESSAMINE *opens her eyes.*

JESSAMINE. Where am I ? Who art thou ? O Peridure !

YVAIN. She calls her lord. 'Tis I, fair Jessamine,
I snatched you from the waves.

JESSAMINE.

Yvain ! Ah, well !

[*She disengages herself from his arms.*

Oh ! you have saved my life, Yvain the Strong !

What can I say to you ?

YVAIN.

To see you live

Is more than all rewards.

JESSAMINE (*giving him a flower*). Take this wet flower.

It will for ever tell you Jessamine

Has not forgotten, and will not forget.

Farewell. [*Sound of hunting horns is heard in the woods.*

YVAIN. May I not tarry for the day

You spoke of—for the chase and tournament ?

And to pay honour to Sir Peridure ?

JESSAMINE. See, it is he.

Enter PERIDURE and ATTENDANTS.

Come hither, Peridure,

A moment past, when sailing on the lake,

A gust of wind caught in the flapping sail,
And I was dragged down by the waves ; I called,
And this great knight, wandering among the woods,
Paid heed and saved me from the lake's cold wave.
It is Yvain the Strong. He tarries here
Awhile, to take a share in tournaments.

PERIDURE. I bid you welcome, Sir Yvain ; our land
Has never yet received so great a guest.

JESSAMINE. Come, maidens ; come, Yvain ; come,
Peridure.

ACT II

Hall in the Castle of Peridure, overlooking the lake. Night.

ROBIN. Why do you look so sad to-day, my Lord ?
The horn is echoing in the sunny woods,
And sighing notes are blown across the lake.
Since first I came as minstrel to this Court,
There has not been such gladsome revelry.

JASON. It is in honour of Yvain the Strong.

ROBIN. Who seeks the violet hills.

JASON. I doubt if he
Will ever seek the violet hills ; he came
To tarry for a day ; a week has passed.

ROBIN. Think you he loves ?

JASON. I know not ; but he feels
The heavy dream that hangs upon this lake—
The subtle curse that strikes the dwellers here.

ROBIN. 'Tis strange ; a snatch of song has proved
enough

To tame this wild rough warrior of the woods.
Yet wherefore are you sad ? Tell me your tale.

JASON. Yes, I am sad ; but Robin, though you sing
The songs of mirth, I do not think you merry.
You laugh, you chatter like a twittering bird—
I sometimes think it is the ghost of you
That laughs and chatters, and that you yourself
Are far away and in a mournful space.

ROBIN. Why think you so ? I am not sorrowful ;
So long as in these Castle walls I dwell
Nothing can mar my happiness.

JASON. Why? Speak!

ROBIN. Perchance it is these woods, this lake, I love.
But tell me, Jason, wherefore are you sad ?

JASON. I, like all men here, wander in a dream
Of twilight, that is full of piteous sounds.
I am no more a knight, no more a man,
Only a helpless harp hung in the air,
Whose trembling strings obey a wayward breeze ;
And yet, a vision lit my life of dream,
A hope, a wonderful felicity.

ROBIN. What was your hope ?

JASON. Robin, to you alone
I feel that I can speak my secret thought ;
You are a minstrel, and a haze of dreams
Is stretched between you and the world, and you
Are like an elfin spirit come to play
With mortals ; you can read their joy and grief
More clearly than themselves, although yourself
You can divine, but cannot feel such things.

ROBIN. But haply I can dream them.

JASON. Dream and guess,
And understand and know ; but never feel.

ROBIN. Sometimes the dream is strangely like the truth.

JASON. But oh ! the difference.

ROBIN. Tell me, friend, your tale.

JASON. I loved ; I thought that as I gave my life
To Love, and sold myself for a frail dream,
I might win Love's ineffable reward
Some day ; but now I know I shall not win
The great reward ; and yet I cannot flee,
Nor leave the dream, nor seek the light of morn ;
Nor, if I could, would win forgetfulness.
And I have offered on a glimmering altar

My life, my freedom, and my fortitude ;
And, yet, I know, if she demanded more,
I'd give my honour and my goodly fame.
And she to whom I make the sacrifice
Used once to smile upon my fiery shrine ;
But now with not a glance she passes by.

ROBIN. If she be heedless, quench the smoking flame.

JASON. I would not if I could ; and if I would
She would not let one heart be unconsumed.

ROBIN. Before you spoke I knew your tale ; you say
I am a bird-like minstrel who ignores
These passions ; yet, my friend, I grieve for you,
And understand the nature of your grief.
But even if you won the great reward
You would find sorrow hidden in the joy.
Listen ; I call this song the Heart of Bliss.

[Sings.

*In Paradise we are,
We cannot hear, nor feel
The noise of the world's wheel ;
We float from star to star.*

*It was the Spring to-day
On earth, you came to me
Beside a hawthorn tree,
Through the white flowers of May.*

*But in the dazdling sphere
Oh, whence the tear that stings ?
Oh, whence these icy wings ?
Sorrow, why art thou here ?*

[Noise of a horn is heard.

[Exit JASON.

Enter JESSAMINE.

JESSAMINE (*to* ROBIN). Robin, I wish to speak with you.
To-night

Enter PERIDURE.

We hold a revel on the lake's green isle.
Can you devise some interlude of song,
Which you, a water-sprite, should sing to me,
Hid in the island trees? I in my boat,
Would sail to you and land upon the isle,
And we would dance a measure to the moon.

PERIDURE. Minstrel, begone.

[ROBIN *withdraws into the recess by the window.*

JESSAMINE.

I have devised a revel

Upon the lake, in honour of Yvain—
A wondrous feast of song and melody.

PERIDURE. 'Tis meet that we should honour our great
guest.

But this I will not, that Yvain should see
These shameful drones that round about you swarm,
Who now are knights no more, but lazily
Spend the long hours in foolish dream and song,
Satellites to your moon—and worst of all
This minstrel, who by subtle, honeyed speech
Found favour with you, who the livelong day
Follows you with soft words and love-sick eyes
And mischief in his heart. And I forbid
This minstrel to take part in any revel
Which you may hold, and I forbid you too
To talk with him.

JESSAMINE. Oh! wherefore these rough words,
Sweet Peridure? It is for your bright fame
That I prepare this revel for Yvain;
I must have freedom in such fantasies,

To choose the minstrel and the song I please ;
Believe me, Peridure.

PERIDURE. Do as you will ;
If you are gracious to this man once more
He shall be slain. One word from you, heed well,
And like a dog he dies.

JESSAMINE. Why talk of death ?
Yet if you ban our knights there will be none
To join the revel ; and Yvain the Strong,
He is a knight, must I not speak with him ?

PERIDURE. You understand my thought, you know my
will.

JESSAMINE. The time of revel has already come ;
The twilight scarcely lingers ; we will dance
A measure here ; I pray you not to mar
The feast with angry frowns. Here come the guests.

*Enter YVAIN, SINTRAM, JASON, KNIGHTS, LADIES, and
MINSTRELS. JESSAMINE and PERIDURE lead YVAIN
to a raised platform on which three thrones are placed.
They seat themselves. Dance. Music.*

JESSAMINE. Whom shall I choose to dance with me a
measure ?

PERIDURE. Yvain, our noble guest.

JESSAMINE. No, Sir, for he
Must needs be weary after the long chase.
Kind minstrel, will you lead me to the dance ?

[JESSAMINE descends from the throne and walks
up to ROBIN. They dance a measure. PERI-
DURE descends from his chair and talks in a
whisper to two of the KNIGHTS.

JESSAMINE (to ROBIN). O gentle minstrel, matchless in
your skill,
Reveal it further ; sing to us a song.

KNIGHTS. Yes, Robin, sing to us a tuneful song.

ROBIN (*sings*).

*Oh, fill the cup and strike the strings,
And crown me with bright flowers ;
My heart is like a bird that sings
In dark midsummer hours ;
He knows the joy must quickly fade
But sings his rapture unafraid.*

*A hope, a dream, a mute desire,
That never could avail ;
A wasted sacrifice of fire
Is all my song, my tale ;
Now, like the dreams of summer night,
When comes the dawn, the song takes flight.*

*I perish for a prayer, a gleam
Of hope that soared too high ;
But since, most dear, you were my dream,
What does death signify ?
A song shall be my latest breath :
Triumphant now I go to death.*

JESSAMINE. It is a mad and melancholy song.

PERIDURE. And not ill-suited to the circumstance.

JESSAMINE. What circumstance ?

PERIDURE. This mad, glad circumstance.

Enter TWO MEN-AT-ARMS. They walk up to ROBIN.

MEN-AT-ARMS (*to ROBIN*). Sir, there awaits you in the
Castle yard

A messenger, who from a far-off country
Has come, and wishes for a word with you.

JESSAMINE. Let him come in.

PERIDURE. Is not the Castle court
A fitter place for such a messenger ?
The minstrel, too, would sooner go to him
Than wait upon him here.

(*To* ROBIN.) Is it the truth ?

ROBIN. Sir Peridure has guessed my wish. I go.
[*He walks past JESSAMINE and looks her in the face.*

“ I perish for a prayer, a gleam
Of hope that soared too high ;
But since, most dear, you were my dream,
What does death signify ? ”

[*Exeunt* ROBIN and MEN-AT-ARMS.

PERIDURE. See, the bright torches flicker on the lake ;
Now let us go to feast upon the isle.
Come, Jessamine.

JESSAMINE. Go, I will come anon.

[*Exeunt* PERIDURE, YVAIN, and KNIGHTS.

JESSAMINE (*to* YOLANDE). Go, fetch me Robin.

[*Exit* YOLANDE.

(*Going to the window.*) Queen of the green lake,
Hear me and give me power and deadly charm ;
Help me that I may once again be free
From the intolerable sway of man.
Give me soft sorcery that I may charm
Yvain the Strong, that he may set me free.

Enter YOLANDE.

YOLANDE. The men-at-arms say that the work is done ;
That my Lord's order is fulfilled, that they
Have hanged the minstrel.

JESSAMINE. Leave me, maidens, go.

[*Exeunt* MAIDENS.

JESSAMINE (*going to the window*). Come to me now, Yvain ;
the moon has risen,

And spirits whisper in the rustling trees ;
It is my hour, the magic of the waters
Is over me. Come, bend unto my will.

Enter YVAIN.

JESSAMINE. Yvain ! you have already left the feast ?

YVAIN. The feast is long and loud.

JESSAMINE. The night is still,
And through the lattice comes the breath of flowers.
Feel you the fragrance of the jessamine,
My flower ?

YVAIN. Oh ! clear amidst the heavy scent
Of lilies I can trace its fragrant speech.

JESSAMINE. And I am even such a helpless flower
Whose speech is lost in richer tides of scent.

YVAIN. You are the spirit and the deity
Of flowers ; the rose and lily bend to you.

JESSAMINE. Ah ! sad, sad, is the birth of summer
night !

YVAIN. Sad, for the wistful ministers of Death
Wander and hold dominion in the world ;
We hear the echoes of his mournful heart
In sighing wind and weeping waterfall ;
Yet in the sorrow a deep ecstasy
Abides, and a triumphant rich despair ;
And he would not exchange his darkling night
For all the golden kingdoms of the noon.

JESSAMINE. My heart is in his pale dominion,
But I am captive to the cruel day ;
My heart is like a wave whose cry is lost
Among the thunders of a boundless sea.

YVAIN. Is it no solace that men worship you ?
Not one, but every heart that lives and beats
Lives but for you.

JESSAMINE. There is no solace here ;
The love of all these men is nothingness.

YVAIN. Haply among so many there is one
Whose love is not the same as every man's.

JESSAMINE. Should there be, he would be a greater
man
Than the great heroes of this little world.

YVAIN. Yet there is one, whose love is greater far
Than theirs.

JESSAMINE. I know of no man anywhere
Whose love would drive him to do all for me.

YVAIN. No, Jessamine ! ah, no ! for I am here.

JESSAMINE. See how the moon has silvered the still lake !

YVAIN. So in the grey and sunless hours of life
An hour of wondrous silver light may shine.

JESSAMINE. How faint and soft the noise of harp and horn
Floats from the isle of feast ! Hark, did you hear
That cry ? A wail from the deep heart of night !
How sad the cry ! How strange the stillness now !

YVAIN. Some moon has lit the darkness of my sorrow,
Some wind has filled it with the breath of flowers ;
And though I still am sorrowful to tears,
My sadness now is soft as summer sound.
For all the world is glimmering with a dream,
That lulls despair to drowsiness divine.

JESSAMINE. Haply some spirit brushed us with his wings ;
A drop of dew from some bright sphere of dreams
Has brought sweet slumber to our weary hearts.

YVAIN. Heed ! Jessamine, until this hour I saw
My life before me like a dreary sea,
A grey, unending ocean, cold and dark ;
But now some magic footfall skims the waves ;
The surf is glistening and no longer moans,
But whispers a soft sob of ecstasy ;

And slow and gradual over the wide sea
A breeze has stirred the petals of the foam ;
And all the ocean seems a fiery chalice,
Opening to catch a drop of holy rain.
And now the breeze rolls towards me like a song,
And washes the grey firmament with flame,
Bearing the mystery and joy of birth.

JESSAMINE. Your dream has lit a dream within my heart ;

I see a wonder in the eastern sky,
The vault of heaven trembles into fire,
Brighter than sunset—softer than the dawn,
As though the skies had melted into mist
And all the stars were shattered into dust.
I hear the motion of unearthly sails ;
I see a ship that proudly rides the sea,
And turns the sapphire wave to living flame ;
And at the helm, a spirit like the sun,
Strikes a gold harp, and wakes the echoing surf.
Oh ! take me to that ship, Yvain the Strong,
And let us seek the islands of the dead.
Ah ! now the ship has vanished into light,
The world grows dim, and like a great dark rose,
It folds its petals over you and me ;
And in the burning fire that is its heart,
Let us be drowned and die in blinding light.

YVAIN. You were the footfall on my twilight sea.

JESSAMINE. You dragged my sunrise from the nether world.

YVAIN. You were the breeze that brought the blush of dawn.

JESSAMINE. And you the spirit harping on the waves.

YVAIN. And you the chalice of mysterious fire,
The heart of that dark rose which is the world.



IN THE NIGHT THEY COULD HAVE SEEN THE CATCING OF A ROSE

I speak in the cold light of day. Oh, hear !
I love you while I breathe, sun of my day ;
I'll love you when I die, star of my dusk ;
I'll love you after death, moon of my night ;
Through all the trackless ways and deeps of space,
Amidst the murmur of this clamorous world,
And in the silence of eternity.

JESSAMINE. Yvain, Yvain, there is no man on earth
Whose love would drive him to do all for me.

[Noise of horns is heard louder.]

YVAIN. What is this little thing ? for every deed
Done for you can be but a little thing.
Speak quickly, for they come.

JESSAMINE.

Kill Peridure.

ACT III

Jessamine's garden.

YVAIN. Where is your lady ?

YOLANDE. 'Tis the hour she sleeps.

YVAIN. Now, before dusk ?

YOLANDE. Within a shady haunt

My lady slumbers the long afternoon.

When comes the dusk she wakes and walks abroad,

Down to the water ; all the livelong night

She floats upon the surface of the lake.

And there are some who say that round her boat

The spirits of the water rise and dance.

YVAIN. Sails she alone there ?

YOLANDE. Nay, for Meadow-Sweet

Sails with her ; strange and different from us all

Is she, since hidden voices in the hills

Answer her song, and when she walks with us

The birds are silent and the waters sigh.

When do you seek the violet hills, Yvain ?

YVAIN. I shall not ever seek the violet hills ;

I come to say farewell to Jessamine.

YOLANDE. You told me when I met you in the wood,

You came to tarry for a moment here.

You came, you tarried, and since that first day

You are quite changed. You are no more Yvain

The Strong, the Fiery-eyed ; the light, the joy,

Has faded from your eyes, and you are dreamy

Like Jason ; mournful, and like Sintram, mute.

If it be true that you indeed depart,
Heed my wise counsel, do not say farewell.

YVAIN. I go to far-off lands on a dark quest.

YOLANDE. To that dark country which the minstrel
sought ?

YVAIN. He has not yet returned.

YOLANDE. And never more

Will he return.

YVAIN. Why ?

YOLANDE. He was put to death

Because he loved the Princess Jessamine.

Oh, take my counsel, do not say farewell.

YVAIN. I must.

YOLANDE. Then when my lady wakes I'll call.

[Exit YVAIN.]

Enter MEADOW-SWEET.

YOLANDE. Whence have you come ? Your hair is wet
with dew ;

Maybe I dream ; you seem to me to shimmer
As though you wandered through some shining cloud.

MEADOW-SWEET. I have been sailing on the lake ; awhile
I slumbered in the sandy island cove—— [Sings.

*Oh ! sweeter is the starless eve
And soft the wakeful dreams,
Come, we will drown the moon, and weave
A garland with its beams.*

Enter JESSAMINE.

JESSAMINE (to YOLANDE). Yolande, go fetch, I pray, my
golden lute.

(To MEADOW-SWEET.) See, Jason comes, go, we will talk
anon.

Enter JASON.

JASON. Sir Peridure is hunting in the woods
And, my squire tells me, savage is his mood ;
He storms and rages ; twice, they say, he vowed
To chase the swarm of idlers from the castle
And kill Yvain.

JESSAMINE. Ah, woe ! Ah, woe is me !
My foes are bitter and I have no friend.

JASON. Your friends are countless, but methinks your
deeds
Can well dishearten them.

JESSAMINE. What deeds are these
That turn my friends to foes ?

JASON. The minstrel, Robin,
More than his life he loved you, Jessamine,
Although you played with him and with his death.
He knew it, and still greater grew his love,
He loved you so that all his life he spoke
No word of love—such words could but displease—
And never man went happier to his death,
Since, as he went to die, you smiled on him ;
And we who mocked him as a crazy minstrel,
Ah ! little did we guess the strength of love
Beneath the motley that he chose to wear.

JESSAMINE. Oh, misery ! oh, rightly did I say
I had no friend.

JASON. Too many you should say.

JESSAMINE. Think you that I partook in the foul
murder ?

This is your love, this is your faith in me !
I caused his death ? Alas ! my friend is slain,
And those who loved me once are false to me.

JASON. Forgive me, Jessamine, I was distraught—

JESSAMINE. Go ; never let me see your face once more.

JASON. Oh, pardon, mercy, mercy, Jessamine !
Out of the raging torment of my love
My wild words were begotten. Oh, forget !
By the strong chain which binds me unto you,
By all the hours which have been sweet to us,
By all the days that cannot be unlived,
Forgive me.

JESSAMINE. If I should forgive you now,
Who knows how soon you'll turn on me again ?
For now, when I am helpless and abandoned,
You come to rail at me. I'll seek the tower
Where Peridure would fain imprison me.

JASON. Let me kill Peridure.

JESSAMINE. No, Jason, no,
You shall not face such peril for my sake ;
For me, on whom you charge blood-guiltiness——

JASON. Have pity, Jessamine.

JESSAMINE. Then leave me now,
For I am far too sad to speak with you. [Exit JASON.]

JESSAMINE. Come, Meadow-Sweet.

Enter MEADOW-SWEET.

So, did you seek our home ?

MEADOW-SWEET. I found the Queen ; but few the words
she spoke ;

I asked her if Yvain could set you free ;
She said : “ He is the weapon ; Jessamine
Needs but to strike through him as I foretold.”
But then she bade me bid you to beware,
And to fulfil the law unto the end.

JESSAMINE. She bade me win the love of strong Yvain :
His love is mine, and he shall set me free ;
She bade me love him ; but when I am free

I shall not stoop to love a mortal man.

MEADOW-SWEET. But, sister, do you love Yvain ?

JESSAMINE.

Oh, child,

I seek but to be free !

MEADOW-SWEET. But he is fair.

JESSAMINE. When I first saw Sir Peridure, my Lord,
It was because he was so fair and strong

I yielded to him unawares ; and now,
When I behold such men, I feel the wound,
The sting of my submission and my shame.

MEADOW-SWEET. Where is the shame ? for Peridure is fair,
Yvain is fair, and more than earthly Queens
Are you, in this Dominion of sweet Dream.

JESSAMINE. I will be free, free as the wind and wave,
As you—as all our sisters of the lake ;
O Meadow-Sweet, you cannot understand !

Enter PERIDURE.

PERIDURE. Jessamine, I would speak a word with you.

JESSAMINE. I wait upon your will.

PERIDURE.

O Jessamine,

O soft and lovely delicate Jessamine,
Flower whom I found asleep upon the moss,
Swift bird I found among the rustling leaves,
Long ago, in the wild enchanted spring,
Of all the idle knights that round you swarm
There is not one that loves you as I love ;
So heed——

JESSAMINE. Speak, Peridure.

PERIDURE.

I ask of you

One thing alone.

JESSAMINE. Speak, speak, my Lord, I hear.

PERIDURE. I love you, as I loved you long ago,
I love and suffer—for you are not kind——

JESSAMINE. What mockery ! You crush my slightest whim ;

You slay my friends——

PERIDURE. Believe me, I repent ;

Now will I grant you all, if you for me

Will do but one slight thing——

JESSAMINE. What is your wish ?

PERIDURE. I wish that you would send away Yvain.

JESSAMINE. Oh, folly ! Are you jealous of Yvain ?

Him the betrothed, who seeks the violet hills ?

PERIDURE. If he to you means nothing, grant my wish.

JESSAMINE. Why must you ever seek to humble me ?

I may not have a friend ; and this Yvain,

Who tarries but a day——

PERIDURE. I beg this of you.

JESSAMINE. No, Peridure, I cannot do this thing.

PERIDURE. There is a lonely castle in the woods,

They name the Lion's Keep. It is prepared ;

Then thither will we go to-morrow noon.

JESSAMINE. You, but not I.

PERIDURE. And I upon my steed

Shall bear you, as I once did long ago,

When first I brought you home to be my bride.

JESSAMINE. You will imprison me ?

PERIDURE. The fault is yours.

JESSAMINE. You murder a poor minstrel ; now Yvain,

Yvain the Strong, has stirred your jealousy ;

And, coward, you must find a meaner way ;

You would not even dare to kill Yvain

By treachery.

PERIDURE. You follow me to-morrow.

JESSAMINE. You have good cause for jealousy, my Lord,

Yvain the Strong torments me with his love ;

In silence I have fought him and alone,

Because I knew my husband was a coward.
 Heed, I have told Yvain to seek me here
 At moonrise.

PERIDURE. Fare you well till rise of moon.

[Exit PERIDURE.]

Enter MEADOW-SWEET.

MEADOW-SWEET. The sun has set ; the surface of the lake
 Is stirring, and awaits your evening song.

JESSAMINE. I shall not go upon the lake to-night.
 Know you this song ? Once Robin sang it me.

*The corn is garnered, the swallows fly,
 The leaves fall soft on their wintry bed.
 There was a dream in the summer sky,
 And song, as soft as a rose's sigh.
 Why should I linger ? the dream has fled,
 The song is silent, the rose is dead.*

*The ghost of the rose is in the air,
 The dead song speaks in the moaning sea ;
 After the dream is the long despair,
 The endless dusk and the unheard prayer :
 " O Death, come quickly and set me free,
 My friend is no longer kind to me."*

MEADOW-SWEET. Hark ! I can hear the water spirits' call.

VOICES FROM THE LAKE. Sister and daughter of the silvery
 wave,

The hour, the fateful hour of freedom comes,
 Forget not what the Queen commanded thee.

ANOTHER VOICE FROM THE LAKE. Thy crown awaits thee
 buried beneath the wave ;

The robe of moonshine, and the wings of dew ;
 Fulfil the mortal law until the end.

ANOTHER VOICE. He comes ! Oh, earn thy freedom,
Jessamine,
And enter thy inheritance of dream.

MEADOW-SWEET. The water spirits warn her ; see, he
comes.

Enter YVAIN.

[Exit MEADOW-SWEET.]

JESSAMINE. Hail, hail, Yvain ! Come quickly to me ; tell
If it is true that there is one on earth
Who loves me, and whose love is great enough
To lead him to dare any deed for me.

YVAIN. Lady, I come with sorrow in my heart ;
My love is greater than all tongues can tell,
And I would die and dare all deeds for you,
Save this ; I will not kill Sir Peridure.

JESSAMINE. Alas ! I truly said that there was none
On earth whose love was great enough for me.

YVAIN. I will not do this, though I by the deed
Should win you.

JESSAMINE. You shall never win me, Sir,
By any deed. I had not asked another.
I thought that you alone were brave enough.

YVAIN. You know it is not fear that prompts my speech.

JESSAMINE. It is not for your sake I asked this deed,
That you should win me thus ; I do not ask
For love, for I can only love the man
Who had done all for me without a thought.
I asked for pity—pity for the slave
Who cringes at the knees of Peridure,
The wretch, who with a smiling face, must see
The murder of her friends. What was the crime
For which the minstrel died ? He was my friend.
So perish all who have been kind to me.
But Peridure is weary of this sport ;

His spies have told him that Yvain the Strong
Loves me, and think you that he brooks the thought ?
Think you he'll wait for a protesting word ?
No, no, Yvain, my death has been decreed.

YVAIN. I knew not of these things.

JESSAMINE. Death is not bitter ;
Bitter the thought that there is none to love me ;
That he whom I had raised above all men
Is but the same as every other man.

YVAIN. Bring me to Peridure, that I may kill him.

JESSAMINE. At moonrise here he purposes to come
To kill me.

YVAIN. It is well ; now will I go.
Farewell, O wondrous, lovely Jessamine.

JESSAMINE. Before you go, forgive my hasty words.

YVAIN. Ah ! sorrow now is heavy on my heart.

JESSAMINE. Forget ! See, in the pale, white lustrous
sky,

The evening star is shining faint and still.

YVAIN. And sounds are rising from the rippling lake.
Or do I dream ? They seem to me to call
And many times to murmur your soft name.

JESSAMINE. I have so often wept upon the lake,
It is the echo of my tears and sighs.

YVAIN. A fragrance rises from the slumbering earth ;
Is it the harbinger of ecstasy ?
The wonder that we tasted yester-night ?
And yet a voice that whispers in my heart
Tells me that this can never be again.

JESSAMINE. I see behind the future's darkling veil
A host of silver shadows, that shall form
The pageant of a million summer nights.

YVAIN. I know not what unearthly mystery
Is in the air, but I can hear the wings

Of some approaching wonder, and I feel
As though the stillness held an unborn song.

JESSAMINE. Perchance an orb more wondrous than the
moon

Trembles beneath the rim of the dark hills.

YVAIN. I hear such singing as I never heard ;
Swift lights gleam far upon the shadowy lake.
Hark ! close to us the nightingale's wild song
Is like a human voice that weeps for joy.

JESSAMINE. I hear no sound—I hear no nightingale,
Only the lapping ripple of the lake.
See ! over the dark hills a fiery cloud !
Soon will the moon rise.

YVAIN. No, it is no moon,
It is the wondrous orb of which you spoke.

JESSAMINE. Look, look, the moon has risen full and high.
Hark ! it is Peridure ! Save me from him !

[PERIDURE *enters behind the trees and darts on*
YVAIN, *who kills him.*

JESSAMINE. Help ! help ! and save me ! for they kill my
Lord !
Help ! for Yvain is slaying Peridure !

Enter MEN-AT-ARMS.

JESSAMINE. Take him and cast him in the castle dungeon !
Let him be hanged before the break of day !

[MEN-AT-ARMS *fall on YVAIN ; he makes no*
resistance, and they lead him away.

Free ! Free ! O lake, now I may come to you,
And seek unshamed my buried crown of light,
My robe of moonshine and my wings of dew.

ACT IV

Jessamine's garden. Night.

JESSAMINE. I have been born again ; captivity
And earthly chains shall bind me nevermore.
Come, sisters ; Meadow-Sweet, prepare my skiff,
Henceforth no earthly sail shall aid our flight.

MEADOW-SWEET. Thy bower is ready ; on the wave it
rests ;

The couch is of rose-petals, round it float
Four water-lilies, each, within its heart,
Holds a soft sphere of lustrous dew that shone
This morning in the day-star's diadem ;
Around it hangs a veil of softest snow
Woven of ghostly blossoms and pale beams
Culled underneath the lake. To serve as tapers
Tall asphodels grown in the glimmering fields
Breathe a dim flame. The bower is walled and roofed
With creeping clusters of white Jessamine
That in faint waves of fragrance speak thy name.

LOOSESTRIFE. To-night the daughters of the emerald
deeps,
Shall sing a lovely lullaby to thee ;
To-night the surface of the lake shall gleam
As though the stars had fallen and floated there.
To-night in the thick woods and on the hills
The strings of haunted harps shall sigh and sound.

MEADOW-SWEET. And over all the world shall hang a mist
As though it had been dipped in a white flame.

LOOSESTRIFE. High in the air strange crystal bells shall chime.

MEADOW-SWEET. The sea shall whisper a soft prayer to-night.

LOOSESTRIFE. The secret fountains and the streams shall sing.

MEADOW-SWEET. The lark shall rise before the break of day

And sing in concord with the nightingale.

LOOSESTRIFE. Unnumbered fireflies, silver-wingèd moths Above thy bower shall soar in a great cloud.

MEADOW-SWEET. And falling stars across the cloudless sky

Shall chase each other like unbridled steeds.

[On the lake a great light is seen.]

LOOSESTRIFE. See, see the spirits come to welcome thee.

[Music is heard.]

JESSAMINE. Come, sisters, lead me to my slumberous bower.

[Exeunt JESSAMINE and SPIRITS.]

Enter YVAIN.

YVAIN. Free ! but what use have I for freedom now ?

I pondered in my prison, to what end
I had been dowered with my boundless strength,
But then I broke my chain and prison bars ;
Ah ! whence this wondrous glimmer on the lake ?
Ah ! whence this splendour in the darkling sky ?
This music and this song ? Ah ! Jessamine,
She holds a revel in her twilight world ;—
But brief shall be the revel, for there come
Two missing guests, and one is the dead ghost
Of him I murdered ; and the second I,
A living ghost. And we shall break the dream.

Dream, Jessamine, for the awakening comes,
This is the last of all thy summer dreams. [Exit YVAIN.

[After a short pause the music suddenly ceases. The
lights on the lake vanish, and all is buried in
darkness.

Enter YVAIN carrying JESSAMINE's body in his arms.

YVAIN. A second time I bear you in my arms ;
Pale were you then ; now you are paler still.
Even as then your eyes were closed, as then
You lie within my arms like a frail flower,
Surely too frail for mortal scythe to mow ;
The ghost of some dead Lily of the valley !

[He lays the body on the ground.

Knights that now watch by Peridure's cold corpse,
Come hither ! Modred, Sintram, Jason, come !

Enter JASON, SINTRAM, and MEN-AT-ARMS with torches.

I broke my bonds. I went to Jessamine ;
Amidst the slumbering lilies and the leaves,
Asleep she lay, like a soft bell of dew
And seemed the living semblance of their dream.
Softly I lifted her. She did not stir,
I breathed one kiss upon her sleeping lips ;
And then—men call me, Sirs, Yvain the Strong—
Across my knees I broke frail Jessamine.
Do you not heed ? I broke her with these hands :
There lies her body, stiff and cold and dead.

[Pause.

Tell me the road now to the violet hills.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

Не видѣли они, какъ время пролетало ;
Бывало грустно имъ, а скучно не бывало.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

KING MARK. (*King of Cornwall.*)

TRISTRAM. (*His Nephew.*)

ANDRET.

DENOALEN.

DUKE HOEL.

THE DUCHESS. (*His Wife.*)

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. (*Their Daughter.*)

SIR KAY HEDIUS. (*Her Brother.*)

A HERMIT.

GRISELDA. (*Iseult of Brittany's Lady.*)

PERSIDES. (*Tristram's Page.*)

ISEULT THE FAIR. (*King Mark's Wife.*)

BRANGWAINE. (*Her Lady.*)

ACT I

SCENE I

Hall in the Castle of Tintagel.

KING MARK. Tristram, my friend, thou who hast been to
me

More than a son, say wherefore art thou sad ?

TRISTRAM. King Mark, I am not sad.

KING MARK. In olden days
Tintagel echoed with thy careless song.

TRISTRAM. Those days were long ago ; I was a boy ;
Since then so many crowded years have passed,
And I have wandered long and far away.

KING MARK. Tristram, it hurts my heart to see thee sad.

TRISTRAM. Let not the King heed Tristram ; I deserve
No passing thought, for fortune has bestowed
Too many gifts on me.

KING MARK. O heart of gold !
Tristram, my son, no gift would be too great
For thee.

TRISTRAM. I pray thee speak not thus, O King.

[Horns sound.]

KING MARK. Hark ! the horn calls us ; wilt thou to the
hunt ?

TRISTRAM. I come.

KING MARK. Then let us follow the glad horn.

[Exeunt.]

Enter ISEULT and BRANGWAINE.

ISEULT. How mournful is the murmur of the sea !
How heavy is the curtain of the sky !
How dark the daylight and how cold the sun !

BRANGWAINE. I pray you, Queen, be governed.

ISEULT. Who can guess

The torment of my heart ?

BRANGWAINE. Alas ! too clear

Your fiery dream is written on your face.

ISEULT. You know the sorrow that I nurse, but they,
How should they know ?

BRANGWAINE. When Tristram is not here

Listless and ghostly are the words you speak ;

Your soul is far away ; but when he comes,

You rise to life like some pale drooping flower
Refreshed by timely rain.

ISEULT. You fancy this.

BRANGWAINE. Not I alone : all see the selfsame thing—
Blind must they be to whom it is not clear.

When you and Tristram meet, they can but see
Love, like a shadow following you ; and love
Burns in your eyes and trembles in your speech.

ISEULT. What should I do ?

BRANGWAINE. Make of your face a mask,

And like a mummer strive to talk and smile

Before the courtiers, and before the King.

ISEULT. I try, but I forget ; and like a wave
The thought of Tristram sweeps me far away.

BRANGWAINE. Queen, be advised, before it is too late.

ISEULT. You know that it already is too late.

BRANGWAINE. Ay, truly vain it is to say “ turn
back ”—

It is too late. There is no turning back.

ISEULT. I sought not Tristram's love ; I strove to hate ;
I hated him.

BRANGWAINÉ. How could you fight the fate
That lurk'd within the drink your mother brewed ?
Blame me, for through my fault you drained the cup,
The cursèd draught made for the King and you.

ISEULT. It was no fault of yours.

BRANGWAINÉ. Ah ! Fate made sport,
Sad sport of us.

ISEULT. And never till the day
We die shall Fate release us from the spell.

SCENE II

Same hall in the Castle. KING MARK is seated on his throne.

Enter ANDRET and DENOALEN.

ANDRET. We claim an audience of the King.

KING MARK. Speak on.

ANDRET. Our words, most gracious Mark, cannot but stir
Great wrath in you ; yet is our duty plain
To lay the unwelcome truth before your eyes.
Tristram, in whom you placed your heart and faith,
Would shame you ; Tristram loves Iseult the Queen.

KING MARK. You lie ! Knaves, envy hath made black
your hearts.

'Tis true that Tristram holds my heart in pawn ;
The day the stranger challenged you to fight
Tristram encountered him and laid him low,
And red blood flowed from many a gaping wound ;
And that is why you hate him ; that is why
I love him. What is it you feign to know ?

ANDRET. We see but what is plain ; what all men see ;
We only pray you, Sir, to use your eyes ;

For even now it may not be too late.

KING MARK. Leave me, sirs.

[*Exeunt* ANDRET and DENOALEN.
(*To* SQUIRE.) Send Sir Tristram here to me.

Enter TRISTRAM.

KING MARK. Tristram, make haste to leave these Castle walls,

Nor cross the moat again ; for men accuse thee
Of treachery ; ask me no question, friend,
I could not speak their hateful speech again
Without dishonour for us both ; nor seek
For soothing words ; I know they would be vain ;
Yet I believed them not ; if I believed
How could I look on thee and let thee live ?
Go. Mark, that loves thee, bids thee go, my son.

[*Exit* TRISTRAM.

Some demon in my heart has sown a doubt.

SCENE III

An orchard. Night.

Enter TRISTRAM.

TRISTRAM. Iseult, far off from you I cannot stay,
I cannot live. And I have come again,
Though death and shame may wait for you and me.
There is a bubbling spring that rises here
Beneath the shadow of this friendly pine ;
It wanders through the trees a running stream,
Between these grassy banks where cowslips grow,
And reaches at the end the Castle yard.
I have cast shreds of bark upon the stream ;
Through the green orchard they will wind their way

And speak a silent message to Iseult,
And she will see, and understand, and come. [Pause.
A gentle ghost is flitting through the trees,
She touches but she tramples not the flowers ;
For she was made one with the spring-time's blossom,
A sister to the bending daffodil.
It is Iseult.

Enter ISEULT.

ISEULT. Upon the rippling stream
I saw the floating bark. And swift I came.

TRISTRAM. There never was so sure a messenger.

ISEULT. And though he whispers an unceasing tale,
He never tells the secret that he bears.

TRISTRAM. I breathed the secret to the spring ; it wells
Beneath this tree and fills the marble cirque,
O'ergrown with moss, with a clear silver film.
Hark, is the murmur mournful ? Is it glad ?

ISEULT. Like all sweet things, it is both glad and sad.
The dancing wave, the laughing wind, the chime
Of bells, the shepherd's reed, the woodland horn,
The words of love we speak ; in all of these
There is a seed of sorrow.

TRISTRAM. It is true ;
For every smile that like a sunbeam shines
Is followed by his shadow.

ISEULT. Brightest things
Cast darkest shade. Such is our love, O friend.

TRISTRAM. Yet think not of the shadow, but the sun.

ISEULT. For us there is no sun. Like happy men
We cannot taste the laughing light of day ;
For us the day is cruel. Only here,
Beneath the branches of this silent tree,
We can be safe and still.

TRISTRAM. Then let us think
The world beyond the orchard is a dream.
ISEULT. The moon has touched the slumber-scented
trees ;
How dim, how frail the apple-blossom shines.

TRISTRAM. The birds are sleeping, and the noisy chough
Is far away.

ISEULT. This morning, in the trees
I heard the cuckoo's cry ; but now he sleeps.

TRISTRAM. All happy creatures sleep, but you and I
Watch.

ISEULT. In the wakeful darkness there is peace,
And silent sadness greater than all joy.
How still and strange the blue deeps of the trees !
The silver air ! I feel a dreamy spell,
As though a wizard's wand, dipped in cool dew,
Had touched and changed us into ghostly leaves.

TRISTRAM. Or drowned our souls beneath the bubbling
spring.

ISEULT. Ay, it were sweet beneath the rippling water,
Captive in those cool liquid deeps, to dream.
Ah ! sad would be the music of the brook
If it were laden with our sighs.

TRISTRAM. And they
Who heard it would weep tears of blessed joy.

ISEULT. So still it is ; listen, the very stream
Seems drowsily to mutter in his sleep.
Haply the world beyond the orchard trees
Is but a lying dream, and this is true.

TRISTRAM. I touch your hand and wake from the world's
trance,
And only this is true. I come to life
When I am here beneath the silent tree,
With you ; but when I go, I fade away,

To wander like a phantom in the night ;
For all the world where you are not is dim,
And all the dwellers in the world are ghosts.

ISEULT. Tristram, without you, empty is the world,
And blind I wander in the light of day.

TRISTRAM. That is the lying dream : the truth is here,
In every whispered word and silent kiss.

ISEULT. Tristram, my friend.

TRISTRAM. Iseult, Iseult, my life.

ISEULT. Hold me and kiss me till the world shall end.

TRISTRAM. The world is dead—but we shall never die.

ISEULT. Or haply we have died, and the world lives
As far away, as silent as the moon ;
But you are still my friend.

TRISTRAM. Iseult, my death !

ISEULT. Say not the sea-folk that Tintagel's towers
Are spellbound, and by magic melt away
Twice in the year ? That breathless hour has come ;
Tintagel's walls have vanished, and these trees,
This orchard is the orchard of the song.

TRISTRAM. Whisper the story softly in my ear ;
Thy voice is sweeter than all song to me.

ISEULT. It tells of a strange orchard, walled around
With wizard air and starred with shining flowers ;
There the frail blossom falls not from the tree,
And there the warrior wanders with his love.
Nothing can mar their dream, no enemy
Can break the wall of air.

[Dawn breaks. Trumpets sound.]

TRISTRAM. The wizard wall
Is shattered ; no, that orchard is not here ;
Nor shall we find its like upon the earth ;
But one day, I shall bear you, O my friend,
To the pale gardens where the minstrels sing,

Where flutes and harps for ever sigh and sound ;
Never the sun shines, but the dwellers there
Ask for no sunshine.

ISEULT.

Take me thither, friend.

[Trumpet sounds again.]

TRISTRAM. The trumpet calls us to the cruel day.

ISEULT. Farewell, my friend.

TRISTRAM.

Iseult, Iseult, farewell.

ISEULT. God guard you ! O God guard and keep us both !

SCENE IV

An orchard. Night.

Enter KING MARK and ANDRET.

ANDRET. Hide yourself, Sir, behind this pine-tree trunk ;
Soon will they come, and you shall slay me, Sir,
If the Queen meets not Tristram on this spot.

Enter TRISTRAM.

TRISTRAM. The moon is full, and like a silver thread
The stream winds glittering through the tangled grass.

[He throws shreds of wood on to the stream.]

How swift the little ships float down the stream ;
They meet, they drift apart, they meet again,
They rise, they sink, like lives of men on earth ;
And at the end they reach tranquillity,
Where the bright fountain splashes on the stone.

[He sees the KING's shadow.]

What is this phantom flitting through the trees ?

Enter ISEULT, who also sees the KING's shadow.

ISEULT (*aside*). God grant that I may be the first to speak.

ISEULT. Tristram ! What, have you dared, in such a place

At such an hour to wait for me ? Ah ! oft
You bade me come to heed your prayer, you said.
What is this prayer ? What do you want of me ?
For I have come at last.

TRISTRAM. Yes, often, Queen,
I sent for you ; but always sent in vain ;
For since I have been banished by the King,
You have not deigned to heed my mournful call.
Have pity ! for the King now hateth me.
I know not why—haply you know the cause.
And who could calm his rage so well as you,
Gentle Iseult ?

ISEULT. Oh ! know you not, the King
Suspects us of a shameful infamy ?
Must I, O shame ! reveal this news to you ?
He thinks that we are bound by guilty love.
God knows—and let him kill me if I lie—
That I have only loved one man.

TRISTRAM. I pray
That you may plead for me, O gentle Queen.

ISEULT. He'd kill me if he knew that I was here.

TRISTRAM. How came he to such thoughts ?

ISEULT. It was not he,
But traitors led him to believe this lie.
“ They love,” they said. ’Tis true you love me, Sir.
Have I not saved you twice from death, and I
Have loved you in return, for are not you
My kinsman ?

TRISTRAM. Beg the King to pity me.

ISEULT. Tristram, you must not ask this thing of me.
The world’s my foe, and should I say one word
I risk a shameful death. Ah ! may God help you.
So often have I whispered to this stream
My sorrow, and told my trouble to the leaves.

Ah ! it is sad, now all the world is joyous,
That I alone should hide a heavy heart,
Because my Lord suspects me of great wrong.

TRISTRAM. And I, when twilight steals upon the world,
Have often sat beside this mossy stone,
Where the spring rises. I have told my tale
To the clear water, and methinks its song
Has sighed a sadder burden since that day ;
And I have prayed the water-sprites to bear
The story of my sorrow to the King,
For it is clear and truthful as the stream.

ISEULT. God help you, for the King has been deceived ;
I pray that he may pardon you. I go,
For I am fearful. I have stayed too long.
Farewell, O gentle Sir.

TRISTRAM. Farewell, O Queen.

[*Exeunt* TRISTRAM and ISEULT.]

KING MARK. Oh, blessed be this hour ! Praise be to God !
Tristram, my son, why did I doubt of you ?

SCENE V

Iseult's chamber. Night.

ISEULT. I know not why, but I am cold with fear.

Enter TRISTRAM.

ISEULT. Tristram ! Make haste to go ! Ah, you are mad
To seek me in the chamber of the King !

TRISTRAM. The King has left the Castle these three hours.
He bade me start before to-morrow's dawn,
To take a written scroll to Carduel's King.

ISEULT. It is deceit ! A traitorous stratagem.
Go ! quickly, go, before they find you here.

TRISTRAM. How could I go, Iseult, nor say farewell ?

ISEULT. I, too, had grieved had you in silence gone.
But we have said farewell. Make haste to go,
I fear the traitors.

TRISTRAM. What is fear to us ?
Surely fear died upon that summer morn
We drank by chance from the same silver cup.

ISEULT. The sail was flapping idly in the air.

TRISTRAM. There was no land in sight.

ISEULT. And in the sky
No cloud.

TRISTRAM. The drowsy mariners all slept.

ISEULT. Only a seagull circled in the air
And cried a strange cold cry ; it made me shiver.
I thought the golden sea, the burning sky,
Must have turned grey ; but no, they had not changed.

TRISTRAM. The sea was like a glittering coat of mail.

ISEULT. And pitiless and cruel was the sun !
I thought of the cool streams of my green home.

TRISTRAM. You bade me fetch you water.

ISEULT. It was wine
You brought.

TRISTRAM. Ah, no ! Ah, no ! it was not wine ;
But bitter bliss, and anguish without end,
Love, Death.

ISEULT. I drank, and gave the cup to you.

TRISTRAM. And then began the torment in my heart.

ISEULT. For many days I strove to hate you still ;
I strove ; the ecstasy within my heart
Was bitterer than all anger then to me.

TRISTRAM. And for three days we spoke no word ; but I
Was tortured and my heart was full of shame ;
During those days I dared not show my face.

ISEULT. On the last day you sought me in my tent,



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ACT II

A forest. Summer.

HERMIT. Tristram, a price is set upon your head.
The Barons swore to capture you alive
Or dead. Tristram, repent, for God forgives
The sinner who repents.

TRISTRAM. But of what crime ?

HERMIT. Your lawless love.

TRISTRAM. Ah ! little do you know
The truth, who judge us. Know you of the wine
We drank together on the fatal ship ?

HERMIT. God help you ! for the traitor's end is death !
You have betrayed your King. Tristram, give back
The Queen unto her lawful Lord.

TRISTRAM. No more
Is he her Lord. She was condemned to death,
And we would both have perished at the stake,
Had I not broken loose and set her free.

HERMIT. You cannot change the truth with subtle speech.
Repent : for he who lives in sin is dead.

TRISTRAM. I live and I repent not. This great wood
Shall keep us safe. Come, come to me, Iseult !

[*Exit* HERMIT.]

Enter ISEULT.

TRISTRAM. The hermit bids me take you to the King.

ISEULT. The world has lost us ; we have lost the world ;
How say you, Tristram ?

TRISTRAM. Friend, so long as you
Are with me, what is there that I can wish ?
If all the stars and worlds were ours, I'd see
You only, you.

ISEULT. I thought in days gone by
That peaceful happiness was not for us.
Yet in this forest we can taste of joy.

TRISTRAM. And every hour unveils another bliss.
Hark to the tinkle of the running stream !

ISEULT. Hark to the rustle of the lime tree's leaves !
It is a haunted tree, within whose heart
Some spirit dwells and whispers to the wind.

TRISTRAM. The noon is humming his soft sleepy song.

ISEULT. And far away I hear a shepherd's flute.
The tune is like a sunbeam to my heart.

TRISTRAM. The notes have died away upon the breeze,
And all is still.

ISEULT. Save where the woodpecker
Taps on the bole of some sequestered tree.

TRISTRAM. This forest is our court. Its branches spread
A royal canopy above our heads.

ISEULT. Our courtiers are the purple butterflies.

TRISTRAM. Our squires and henchmen are the wild brown
bees.

ISEULT. Our gems are drops of dew ; our gold the broom.
Lest we should miss the shimmer of bright robes
The darting kingfisher delights our eyes.

TRISTRAM. Our morning herald is the lark, the thrush
Our ballad-monger, and the whistling blackbird
Our flute-player.

ISEULT. The squirrel is our fool.
Our chapel lies in the dark forest aisle.

TRISTRAM. Where the stream tells its rippling rosary.

ISEULT. At Vespers incense rises from the pool.

TRISTRAM. And fireflies are the tapers of the shrine.

ISEULT. The nightingales the Ave Mary sing.

TRISTRAM. The noon is heavy : let us seek our cave.

SCENE II

The forest. Autumn.

HERMIT. How long, O Tristram, will this madness last ?
Have courage, take Iseult back to the King.

TRISTRAM. Ask me not this : for it can never be.

HERMIT. Have you no thought for her ? What piteous
plight

Is hers through you ? She, born to be a Queen,

Is now no better than a hunted beast.

What is her lot ? Instead of silken robes

And glittering courts, you give her this wild wood ;

A cave, and roots to eat, the frost, the cold ;

All this for you she bears without a word.

Shame, shame upon you, Tristram ! Is not she

His bride, true wedded by the rite of Rome ?

[*Exit* HERMIT.]

Enter ISEULT.

TRISTRAM. Your cheek is pale and wistful is your smile.
Iseult, tell, tell me, if your heart be sad.

ISEULT. Tristram, you know full well I am not sad.

TRISTRAM. Are you not wearied of this life, Iseult,
Of these rough days ?

ISEULT. My friend is with me still :
I know not if the days be rough or fair.

TRISTRAM. Nay, you are sad.

ISEULT. To see the swallows fly,
To see the faded leaves fall one by one ;
And sad because I know that what is fled

Shall never be again.

TRISTRAM. Already sown
Are golden seeds of blissful hours to be.

ISEULT. But this long dream can never be again :
The first free wanderings in the leafy wood :
Those hours are dead. Tristram, methinks that you
Have sadder thoughts than I.

TRISTRAM. Iseult, my joy,
How can the sun give darkness ?

ISEULT. You are sad.

TRISTRAM. I grieve to see you beaten by the wind,
To see you sleep upon the rugged ground.
Iseult, when winter comes, what shall befall ?

ISEULT. When winter comes we in the hermit's cave,
Beside the blazing boughs, shall little heed
The storms ; the snow shall be our coverlet.

TRISTRAM. Yet my heart aches for you. I fear you hide
Your grief.

ISEULT. One thing alone can sadden me :
To see that you are mournful. O my friend,
Great is my happiness if you are glad.
Only I fear lest you be wearied now
Of loneliness and of this savage wood.

TRISTRAM. There where my daylight is, my life, my joy,
There is no loneliness. One thought is dark :
To think the happiness must have an end.

ISEULT. It shall not end.

TRISTRAM. I know the end must come ;
We never shall be free from our dark fate,
Free on the earth like other happy men.

ISEULT. Think not of what has been, nor what shall be,
But say you are not changed.

TRISTRAM. Iseult, my life !

ISEULT. Enough. Tristram, my friend, it is enough.

Enter HERMIT.

TRISTRAM. It is the holy hermit. Speak with him.

[*Exit* TRISTRAM.]

HERMIT. Iseult, God bids thee seek thy lawful lord.

ISEULT. Forsaking Tristram? No, it cannot be.

HERMIT. It shall be, if your love is great enough.
Should Tristram live an outcast in the woods?
Tristram, the brave, the great adventurous Knight!
Tristram, who in the castle of a King
Should live surrounded by a hundred squires.
He who should visit the great fields of war,
And run at tilt in tourneys with his peers.
For you he leaves the world; for you he roams,
An outlaw, wandering homeless in a wood.

ISEULT. O hermit, leave me, for you tear my heart.

SCENE III

*Another part of the forest. Autumn. On one side of the stage
is the Hermit's Cave where ISEULT is lying asleep.*

Enter KING MARK.

KING MARK. They told me that within a leafy cave
A shining fairy slumbered in a trance.

[*He walks to the cave and sees* ISEULT.]

Iseult! Oh! canst thou live and be so fair?
Thy face and features wear the blessed peace,
The radiant smile that lights the happy dead;
And yet thou art alive, for wert thou dead,
Thy cheek would not be tinged like a soft rose;
Inscrutable and wondrous is thy smile;
Oh, would to God thy heart were innocent!

Enter HERMIT.

I found Iseult the Queen in this thy cave ;
Now tell me where is Tristram's hiding-place ?

HERMIT (*aside*). Praise God ! I will fulfil the work of
peace.

(*To KING.*) O King, Sir Tristram dwells not in this
cave,

But far away in the deep forest's heart ;
And only when Iseult has fallen asleep
He ventures here and feeds his gaze awhile
Upon her sleeping form, and when she stirs
He flies into the thickets of the woods.
And ofttimes, when the sun beats on her face,
He shields her from its rays with shady leaves.
And, as he gazes, tears bedim his eyes ;
But never comes he here at other times,
Lest he should do dishonour to his King.
Has he not sworn his innocence to thee,
O King ? thou didst not deign to heed his word.

KING MARK. Speak you the truth ? Dark, dark has been
my fault.

Great-hearted Tristram, must my meaner heart
For ever doubt of you and be deceived ?
But I am ready to set right the wrong.
See, I will signify my will : I take
This ring from Iseult's finger, in its stead
I place my own, the ring she gave to me,
And when she wakes my message will be clear.

[*Exit KING MARK.*

HERMIT. O God, forgive the lie upon my lips,
I spoke the falsehood in the cause of peace.

[*ISEULT awakes.*

Enter TRISTRAM.

ISEULT. I dreamt that one was watching while I slept,
And, while he watched, he wept, then he bent down,
And took away my ring, and in its place
He put his own. Look you upon my finger,
The ring is changed, hermit. It is the ring
I gave King Mark upon our bridal day.
Who hath done this ?

HERMIT. The King himself was here
And wept for pity as he gazed on you.
His heart is full of sorrow, he believes
The oath of innocence that Tristram swore,
He minds how he condemned you both unheard,
And now his only wish is to forgive.

TRISTRAM. Forgive ! Ah ! who could pardon such a
fault
Without ignobleness ? No, hermit, no ;
But he remembers how, a little child,
I, at his feet, played on a golden harp ;
He minds how oft my blood has flowed for him ;
The oath I swore, the judgment that I claimed ;
He cannot guess the riddle of our lives ;
He doubts, he hopes ; now he will let me prove
My words in combat ;—I must then give back
Iseult. Oh, wherefore did he come ? Before
I could feel hate for him, but by his deed
He stirs the old compassion in my heart.

HERMIT. Tristram, be brave, and bring the Queen to him ;
Tristram, the time has come to take the Queen
From this wild forest and this savage life.

TRISTRAM. What thinkest thou, Iseult ?

ISEULT. What passeth speech ;
Yet if you will it so, so let it be.

TRISTRAM. Then, holy hermit, heed ; I will obey ;
Help me to make agreement with the King.
Go back, Iseult, and I will leave this land,
I will to Brittany, and if one day
The King should call me, I will come once more.

ISEULT. It is so willed, it must be, and although
I do not now repent me that I loved
Tristram, and that I love him ; still from now
Our lives must be divided, though my heart
Shall never leave his heart.

HERMIT. Oh, praised be God !
The King is hunting in the wood to-day ;
I will to him and bring him here to you.

[*Exit HERMIT.*]

TRISTRAM. Iseult, Iseult, dark is this hour of grief !
It is the bitter end of the sweet cup.

ISEULT. Nay, not the end. And was not the first drop
Bitter and sweet as is the last ? For us
There is no end, but we, until we die,
Shall drift together like two floating leaves
Upon a running stream ; never for long
Together, never parted utterly.

TRISTRAM. Like the small shreds of bark I used to cast
Upon the orchard stream in days gone by ;
Yet now our parting must be long.

ISEULT. A night,
Lingering and dark perchance, but dawn will come.

TRISTRAM. There may be glimpses at the dawn and dusk
For us ; but we shall never more be free
To wander throughout all the careless day.

ISEULT. Till Death ; then, in the night or in the day,
Together, unmolested, we shall roam.

TRISTRAM. Not yet, Iseult : that hour has not yet come ;
And oh, the bitter grief to lose you now !

ISEULT. Take this green ring and wear it for my sake ;

And should you ever send this ring to me,
No walls, no chains, no bars, nor stern command
Shall keep me from fulfilling my friend's wish.

TRISTRAM. God bless the ring and her that gave it me.
How shall I live without her ?

ISEULT. Fate has bound
Our lives together and I dare not think
How I shall live ; but this alone I know,
My heart will follow you across the world.

TRISTRAM. O friend, I go. I know not to what land ;
But should I ever send you the green ring,
Will you fulfil the wish that it shall bear ?

ISEULT. Thou knowest well no walls, no chains, no bars
Shall keep me from fulfilling thy heart's wish,
Be it wisdom or mad folly.

TRISTRAM. God be good
To you !

ISEULT. God guard you always, O my friend !

Enter KING MARK, ANDRET, HERMIT, and BARONS.

TRISTRAM. O King, I give you back Iseult the Fair ;
And I stand here to prove to all the world
In combat that I never loved the Queen
With guilty love, that had offended you.
Deceived by traitors you had had us burnt
Untried, unheard, had God not pitied us ;
No hearing was I given. Let me now
Be judged, and let me justify myself
In battle. And if vanquished, kill me, Sir ;
If victor, let me serve you as before.

ANDRET (*aside to the KING*). Sir, heed my counsel.
Wrongly evil tongues

Spake slander of the Queen, yet if Sir Tristram
Returns to Court, those tongues will speak once more.

TRISTRAM. Who will accept my challenge ? [Silence.

There is none

Who dares. O King, you speak no word to me.

Take back the Queen. And I will leave you, Sir,

And seek a far-off country ; Brittany

Or Wales.

KING MARK. My son, oh, whither will you go
Thus ragged, thus unbannered ? Here is gold.

TRISTRAM. King, I will take no single piece of silver,
But, as I am, I shall in distant lands
Offer my service to some alien King.

[Exit TRISTRAM.

ACT III

SCENE I

Iseult's room in Tintagel.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Brangwaine, I know not why, but
these last days

There have been moments when my heart seemed light,
As though my pain had melted quite away.

BRANGWAINE. Time heals the bitter wounds of fate.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Ah, no !

A million centuries might o'er me roll
And undiminished would my sorrow be.

BRANGWAINE. And yet you say your heart seems light at
times.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. It is since Tristram sent me the
small bell,

The silver bell that hangs about my neck.
I wear it now ; strange when I hear it tinkle,
A sudden ray of sunshine warms my heart,
And I am sad no more.

BRANGWAINE. It is his gift.
The thought of Tristram makes life sweet to you,
Each time you listen to that little bell.

[*ISEULT takes off the bell.*]

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Hark to its silver sound ! Ah,
I could cry

For joy ! I feel a gladness in my heart.

BRANGWAINE. It is the thought of Tristram.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Nay, that thought
Would rather bring me pain.

BRANGWAINÉ.
They say the bell
Was brought by Merlin from Avilion's Isle.
ISEULT OF CORNWALL. The bell is faëry ! He has sent
it me
That I might lose my sorrow and forget.
I will not taste of comfort while my friend
Suffers. He might have kept the magic solace.
He kept the sorrow and he gave the joy.
It shall not be. For Tristram, I will suffer
As well as you, so long as you are sad.
I cast you, cursèd bell, into the sea !

[Goes to the window.

Brangwaine, 'tis true : a curtain veils the sun :
And in my heart the ancient sorrow aches.

SCENE II

Hall in the Castle of Carhaix, Brittany. ISEULT with the white hands, and DUCHESS HOEL.

DUCHESS. Thy bridal robe is almost ready, child.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. When will the feast be? for the
days pass by
But Tristram never speaks of it to me.

DUCHESS. Methinks he loves you well, and that his days
Pass wondrous sweetly, like a dream of bliss.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Haply he loves me : dreamy is his mood :
It is as though his mind were far away.

DUCHESS. And yet he loves you.

HEULST OF BRITTANY. He is kind to me.
And when the minstrels sing of me in song,
His face lights up with a strange wistful smile.

DUCHESS. He loves the minstrelsy?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. It is my bridal veil.

TRISTRAM. Our wedding ? Strange !

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Why strange, my Lord ?

TRISTRAM. Nay, nay, it is not strange.

Yet it is strange that I, in Brittany,
Should wed : so far away from Cornwall's shores
Where I have lived.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Why left you Cornwall's shores ?

TRISTRAM. To seek adventure, for I always loved
To wander.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Over the plains and in the woods.

TRISTRAM. Long, long ago I wandered in a wood :
For days which seemed like months, for months like years.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Were you alone ?

TRISTRAM. I had a faithful friend.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Where is he now ?

TRISTRAM. Gone, gone, I know not where.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. When is our marriage day ?

TRISTRAM. Whenever the Duke
Decrees. I shall be ready ; but these days
Are soft and pleasant as a summer dream.
I would not break the spell of the still hours.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Think you the clarions of the
wedding feast
Will break the spell ?

TRISTRAM. Perchance they'll bring to us
Another dream, more sweet, a longer dream.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. You love to dream.

TRISTRAM. In slumberous forest lands
They rocked me to the sound of a sad sea.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Is it as fair a land as Brittany ?

TRISTRAM. Just such a land. Another Brittany ;
The woods are darker and the billow's song
Is sadder.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Ah, the sadness of that sea
Is in your eyes. You must have tasted grief,
Once, long ago.

TRISTRAM. So long ago, that now
It seems as though it had not ever been.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Tell me your tale of grief.

TRISTRAM. There is no tale.
Some birds there are who twitter merrily,
Others who sing a plaintive song ; of such
Was I ; for I was born in grief.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. But now
You feel no grief ?

TRISTRAM. My grief was long ago.
Now I am lapped in stillness and content.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. And love ?

TRISTRAM. Oh yes, and love, gentle Iseult.

Enter the DUKE.

THE DUKE. The marriage feast shall be to-morrow's morn,
If such your pleasure.

TRISTRAM. I am ready, Sir,
To wed your child Iseult before the priest.

[Exeunt DUKE and ISEULT OF BRITTANY.]

Enter PERSIDES.

PERSIDES. To-morrow the wedding feast shall be held.

TRISTRAM. So they have told me.

PERSIDES. Are you ready, Sir ?

TRISTRAM. Ready for what ?

PERSIDES. To wed Duke Hoel's child.
Oh, little did we dream in days gone by
That you would wed Iseult of Brittany.

TRISTRAM. Devious and strange is the dark path of Fate.

PERSIDES. Mind you the orchard by Tintagel's tower ?

TRISTRAM. It seems as though I had been dead since then,
And all those years are like the shadowy ghosts
That roam beyond the dark forgetful stream.

PERSIDES. And are you happy, Sir ?

TRISTRAM. I know not, boy.
I am not sad, and tranquil is my heart.
Yet all is strange to me ; this life, this Castle,
Iseult of Brittany. Is this a dream ?
And have I died and found another world ?

PERSIDES. It is no dream.

TRISTRAM. I feel that I am borne
Gently upon a river to the sea,
To a wide ocean of content and calm.

PERSIDES. Perchance a storm awaits you on that sea.

TRISTRAM. I know not ; but I know that it is sweet
To drift upon the flood and to forget.

PERSIDES. Have you forgotten ?

TRISTRAM. All is strange and dim ;
I am secure in the strong hand of Fate ;
I feel as though, from a long fever freed,
I looked with dreamy eyes on a new world.

PERSIDES. Know you this song ? It is a lullaby.

[Sings.

*An orchard grows beyond the sea,
Encircled by a wall of air ;
The blossom falls not from the tree,
The earth smells sweetly there.*

*Two lovers dream within that wall,
The night it lasts for ever there ;
For in the dawn no bugle-call
Can break that wall of air.*

TRISTRAM. Haply I heard it in the days gone by.

SCENE III

*Iseult of Brittany's room. Wedding procession, with torches,
passes across the stage.*

Enter TRISTRAM *and* ISEULT OF BRITTANY.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. It is a wondrous night, the sea is
singing

A lullaby of love ; was ever night

As soft and warm as this on Cornwall's shores ?

TRISTRAM. Yes, often there the nights were soft and warm.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. And there you used to wander in
the woods ?

TRISTRAM. Ah, yes !

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. To seek adventure, to set free
Captives, and to deliver lovely Queens ?

TRISTRAM. I never met but with one lovely Queen.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. What was her name ?

TRISTRAM. The selfsame name as yours,
" Iseult."

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Did you deliver this Iseult ?
From whom ? and how ?

TRISTRAM. A King had sentenced her
To death : he thought that she was false to him.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Had she been false ?

TRISTRAM. Nay, she was never false.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. You set her free, and then ?

TRISTRAM. And then she fled.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Alone ?

TRISTRAM. A faithful slave had followed her.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. And what became of her ?

TRISTRAM. The King forgave,
And she returned and dwelt with him in peace.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. And did she give you no reward,
no gift ?

TRISTRAM. I asked for no reward. What should she give ?
Nay, it is true, bidding farewell, one gift
She gave.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. What gift ?

TRISTRAM. A ring ; I had forgot.
But see, it is upon my finger still—
This little jasper hoop that glitters green.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Give me that ring !

TRISTRAM. You have the ring I gave
Before the priest. It is not meet to change.

[TRISTRAM goes to the window and gazes out on
to the sea.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Tristram, my Lord, what is it ails
you ? Speak—

Come to me : seal our marriage with a kiss.

TRISTRAM. Iseult, I pray you be not wroth with me ;
But long ago I made a solemn vow—
I was in dreadful peril in a battle,
When, mindful of Our Lady's blessed name,
I vowed, that if She saved me from the peril,
I would, when wedded, let a whole year pass
Before I gave and took the wedding kiss.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. So be it ! Oh, my Lord : fulfil thy
vow !

ACT IV

Hall in Tintagel. KING MARK and ISEULT are seated on two thrones, surrounded by COURTIER.

Enter TRISTRAM disguised as a madman.

COURTIER. A crazy madman, Sir, has come to Court.

KING MARK. Let the mad fool approach.

[They lead him to the KING.]

Welcome, Sir friend.

TRISTRAM. Hail ! best and noblest of all Kings ; I knew
My heart would melt if I should see thy face.

KING MARK. What seek you here, Sir fool ?

TRISTRAM. I seek Iseult ;

Iseult the Fair I loved in days gone by.

I bring you, Sir, my sister ; let us change :

For the Queen wearies you, give her to me.

KING MARK. And whither would you take Iseult, the
Queen ?

TRISTRAM. Beyond the clouds and far above the sun ;
To where my castle with the crystal walls
Hangs like an opal in the morning air.

COURTIER. The madman speaketh well.

KING MARK. What made thee hope

The Queen would heed a crazy fool like thee ?

TRISTRAM. I have the right to hope. I for her sake
Have suffered many things, and lost my wits.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Who art thou, madman ?

TRISTRAM. I no longer know ;

But in the days gone by I was a minstrel ;
I loved the moon, and all night long I sang
Louder and sweeter than the nightingale.
Song made me mad at last.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. What is thy name ?

TRISTRAM. "Wanderer," for I have wandered o'er the
world,

And seen the dark dominions of the dead ;
There on the sable throne a pallid Queen
Sits crowned with flowers that grew by streams of dusk ;
Her eyes are sadder than the withered flowers,
And sad and listless is her silent smile.

KING MARK. Spake you with her ?

TRISTRAM. I sang her a soft song
Of a strange orchard walled about with air,
Where yellow daffodils upon the grass
Are sprinkled thick like stars ; and when I sang
She wept, for she remembered flowers like those.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Sing us the song.

TRISTRAM. I have forgotten it ;
And there is no more song within my heart.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Know you the ballad of the jasper
ring ?

TRISTRAM. A thousand ballads echo in my brain ;
I cannot sing ; the lute within my heart
Is broken, and its strings can only wail.
Yet, long ago, I loved the silver moon ;
She came to earth and kissed me while I slept.
It was a foolish thing to love the moon.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Then it was love that made you
mad ?

TRISTRAM. Not love
Alone ; I was enchanted by a spell.
I sailed upon the broomstick of a witch

Who willed that wheresoever I should go
Her name should haunt me like a jingling bell ;
I could not rid me of the silver sound
That tinkled in my heart : it made me mad.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. What was the witch's name ?

TRISTRAM.

It was Iseult.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL (*to KING*). Was ever there so mad
a loon ?

(*To TRISTRAM.*) They say

There was a wizard in Avilion's Isle,
Who bore around his neck a faëry bell ;
And they who heard its sound forgot their grief.
Know you of this ?

TRISTRAM. Once, it was long ago,
I met a Knight who had a faëry bell ;
He gave it to his lady-love, and she
Forgot him.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Thou dost lie !

TRISTRAM.

Know you the Knight ?

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. How should I know him, crazy
fool ? and yet

Thou shalt not blame a woman here.

TRISTRAM.

Iseult,

Oh, give me back my wits you stole away,
When in the guise of the bright moon you lived.
Give me the wits you stole a second time,
When you bewitched me with a haunting name.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. King, bid this fool begone ; he
wearies me.

TRISTRAM. Oh, see you not the Queen is smit with love ?
Mark you how pale she is, how bright the flame
That glistens in her eyes. She is a witch !
Oh, burn her at the stake, King Mark, for she
Would shame you for the love of a mad fool.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. O cursèd madman, you are crazed
with wine.

TRISTRAM. 'Tis true that I am crazed ; but with a
wine

Whose bitter fumes will never die away.

O Queen, can you recall that summer noon ?

The sail was flapping idly in the air ;

There was no land in sight, the sailors slept.

The sea was gold ; the sky was hot like fire,

And you were thirsty ; have you quite forgot ?

We drank together of the selfsame cup.

Since then I have been maddened with that wine.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Sir, drive this man away. I will
not hear him.

KING MARK. Wait : let us hear his madness to the end.
Say, fool, what canst thou do ?

TRISTRAM. I play the harp,
And in the forest like a thrush I sing,
And in the orchard like a nightingale.
I can slay dragons, kill false-hearted Knights,
Throw shreds of bark upon the running stream ;
Love Queens, and live on berries in a wood.
Am I not, Sir, a goodly minstrel ? See !

[He belabours the COURTIERs with his stick.]

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Sir, I am weary ; let me seek my
room.

I can no longer hear this noisy fool.

KING MARK. 'Tis we will leave you. Follow us, mad fool,
And show your skill in sport and song.

[Exeunt KING MARK, TRISTRAM, and COURTIERs.]

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Brangwaine !

Brangwaine ! My heart is sick with hope and fear ;

A fool, a madman, has been here, and he

Must be a wizard, for he knows my life.

The secret things none know but you and I ;
Unless——

BRANGWAINÉ. Unless 'tis Tristram !

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Oh, the hope !

The fear ! If it be he, how dares he come
And risk a shameful death ?

BRANGWAINÉ. Queen, calm thyself :
Haply this man is Tristram's messenger.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Go, bring him hither ; I will to
my chamber ;
Fetch me, if haply what you think be true.

[*Exit* ISEULT. *Exit* BRANGWAINÉ, and returns with
TRISTRAM.

TRISTRAM. Brangwainé, Brangwainé, have pity upon me !

BRANGWAINÉ. Madman, what demon taught my name
to you ?

TRISTRAM. Ah ! long ago, Brangwainé, I learnt your
name,

And if my wits have left me it is you
Who are the cause ; for should you not have guarded
The poison that I drank upon the sea ?
Out of a silver cup, in the great heat
I drank, and gave the goblet to Iseult ;
Brangwainé, can you recall that breathless hour ?

BRANGWAINÉ. No !

TRISTRAM. Pity, pity on me !

Enter ISEULT OF CORNWALL.

Pity, Queen !

[*He opens his arms to embrace* QUEEN ; *she shrinks,*
shuddering, from him.

[*Exit* BRANGWAINÉ.

TRISTRAM. Ah ! truly I have lived a day too long,
For I have been rejected by Iseult.

She spurns and shrinks from me. Iseult ! Iseult !
Slow to forget is he who loveth well.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. I doubt ! I am afraid ! I do not know !

TRISTRAM. Iseult, I am that Tristram whom you loved,
Who loved you for so long. Have you forgot
The shreds of bark I cast upon the stream ?
The friendly shadow of the tall pine tree ?
The orchard like the orchard of the song ?
Have you forgot the forest where we dwelt ?
Our courtiers that were purple butterflies,
Our gems the dewdrops, and our gold the broom.
The blackbird was our minstrel all day long ;
At dusk, in the dark aisle by fireflies lit,
The nightingales our Ave Mary sang. . . .
She speaks no word. Ah ! will she know this ring ?
The little jasper ring she gave to me.
No walls, she said, no bars, no stern command
Will keep me from fulfilling my friend's wish.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. O Tristram, take me : I am here for you.

TRISTRAM. But why were you so long to know me, friend ?

What is the ring ? It had been sweeter far
If you, but by the memories of our love,
Had known me.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Sooner than you spoke I knew.
Think you I did not know your sad, sad eyes ?
I knew ; but, Tristram, I was sick with fear ;
For enemies surround me on all sides.
I thought that haply an enchanter's spell
Deceived me, that some foe was mocking me.
I knew, yet dared not know, that it was you ;
I trembled lest my heart should lend them sight.

I feared ; I waited for the jasper ring.
And, now I see the ring, I yield to you ;
I swore to do what you should wish, O friend,
If I should see that ring, and here am I :
Wisdom be it or folly, take me now.

TRISTRAM. Know you, Iseult, why I have sought you
here,

Disguised in this wild garb ? I came, Iseult,
Because I know the hour of Death is nigh :
I know that I shall perish far away
From you, and banished from my heart's desire.
I know the hour of Death is almost come.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Hold me and kiss me, so that our
two hearts

May break, and that our souls may fly away.
Oh, take me to the far-off land of bliss
Of which you used to tell me long ago :
To the green orchard walled with wizard air.

TRISTRAM. Yes, I will take you to the land of bliss.
The hour is nigh. Have we not drained the dregs
Of bitter misery and bitter joy ?
The whole of happiness, the whole of grief ?
The hour is nigh when all shall be fulfilled ;
If I should call you, will you come to me ?

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Call me, my friend ; you know
that I will come.

TRISTRAM. God bless you, friend, for this, your loving
thought.

Enter HERALDS, COURTIER, KING MARK, etc.

[HERALDS *blow their trumpets.*

KING MARK (*to* ISEULT OF CORNWALL). Fair Queen, the
King of Carduel, with his Knights
Is here ; come, let us go to welcome him.

[*He takes ISEULT by the hand and leads her to the door, followed by the BARONS and the COURTIERs.*

A SQUIRE (*to* TRISTRAM). Fool, heard you not that Carduel's King had come ?

Your place is with the beggars and the dogs ;
Get hence.

TRISTRAM. There is no need to banish me,
For here my task is finished to the end.

ACT V

SCENE I

Castle of Carhaix.

DUCHESS HOEL. My child, what ails you ? Listless, sad,
and pale
You seem to me.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Have I not cause for care,
Since to-day Tristram leaves me for the fight ?

DUCHESS. What is the fight to him ? He all his life
Has fought ; and on the earth he has no peer.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Yet it is sad for me to say farewell.
Last night I dreamed that Tristram came to me,
Back from the battle, crowned with leaves of fire ;
And from his forehead, darker than a ruby,
The red blood dropped, and he was pale as death.
I cried, but oh, he paid no heed to me !

DUCHESS. My child, this is but folly.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. It is true ;
But I am foolish, for my love is great.

DUCHESS. See, it is he : he comes to say farewell.

[*Exit* DUCHESS.]

Enter TRISTRAM.

TRISTRAM. The hour has come to say farewell, Iseult.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. But when wilt thou return ?

TRISTRAM. Soon, soon, Iseult,
Unless I fall in battle.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. God forfend !

TRISTRAM. It were a goodly death.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY.

Oh, speak not thus.

TRISTRAM. It were a goodly death to fall in battle ;
Yet have no fear, for I shall soon return.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Tristram, my Lord, I am a foolish child.

In everything I would fulfil thy wish ;
But one thing I desire : I pray you stay,
And go not to this fight.

TRISTRAM. I gave my word.

Iseult, I swear thy fears are foolishness.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. This is the only boon that I have begged,

The only gift I need. If in your heart
There be a little love, I beg you stay.

TRISTRAM. Iseult, my little lily-handed child,
I swore to meet this foe ; my word is pledged.
I swear to you there is no cause for fear.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Then be it as you will. Farewell,
farewell.

TRISTRAM. Farewell, gentle Iseult, few days shall pass
Before I come again.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Farewell, farewell.

[*Exit* TRISTRAM.]

Griselda !

Enter GRISELDA.

He is gone ! Tristram is gone !

GRISELDA. What troubles you ? We knew that he should go.

Before three days are past he will return.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. I prayed him not to go. Last night
I dreamed
That he was dead.

GRISELDA. Lady, dreams are deceit.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. It is no dream that saddens me ;
but now

I suffer with great sadness, for I know
That Tristram loves me not, and never now
Will Tristram love me.

GRISELDA. Nay, you are distraught !

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. I know ; I know. For were there
in his heart

One ray of love, he would have seen the thought
That lies within the darkness of my heart,
And he could not have gone.

GRISELDA. These words are folly,
Begot of groundless fear.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. He loves me not.
Ah ! long ago I feared he loved me not ;
But foolishly I thought that love would come ;
But now there is another whom he loves.

GRISELDA. Lady, 'tis madness !

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. No, it is the truth,
I know not whom he loves, but there is one ;
He could not gaze and gaze across the sea
With such sad, wistful eyes, did he not love.
I know not who she is ; I only know
He loves her, and that she is far away.

SCENE II

Castle of Carhaix. TRISTRAM lying on a bed.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. How fares it, Tristram ?

TRISTRAM. It is well, the wound
Aches not so sorely ; soon will it be healed.
Iseult, bring me thy brother. I have words

That I must speak to him.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. He comes, my Lord.

Enter SIR KAY HEDIUS.

TRISTRAM. And I would speak with him awhile alone.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. I go, my Lord.

[ISEULT goes, but hides behind the arras of the door.]

TRISTRAM. My friend, my wound is sore.

The sword of Bedalis I slew, from whom
I got this wound, was poisoned, and I know
That it will never heal, and I shall die.

SIR KAY HEDIUS. Nay, speak not thus.

TRISTRAM. Already I can hear
The muffled step of Death upon the stair ;
There is no doubting of that sound : I die.
But O true friend, who knowest all my story,
Who, understanding all, hast pardoned me ;
Before I die I fain would see Iseult,
Iseult the Fair, Iseult whom I loved well ;
And, had I but a messenger to send,
I know that swiftly she would come to me.

SIR KAY HEDIUS. I will to Cornwall. I will bring her here :
Tristram, for you I would risk many deaths,
And naught shall hinder me in this attempt !
Give me your message and I will set out.

TRISTRAM. I thank you. Take this jasper ring to her ;
If she but see it she will find a way
To hear you. Tell her I am dying now ;
That only she can bring me help and life.
Bid her be mindful of our happy days,
Of all our joy, of all our misery ;
Our love, the cup we drained upon the sea ;
The oath I swore to love but her alone.
I kept the oath. The oath she swore to me

To come if she should see my jasper ring.

SIR KAY HEDIUS. I will.

TRISTRAM. But to thy sister say no word.

Tell her you go to seek a leech for me.

Two sails take with you ; one black and one white ;

And if you bring Iseult with you, then hoist

The white sail ; if without her you return,

Let it be black. I have no more to say.

Farewell, and may God bring you safely home.

SIR KAY HEDIUS. I go. I will bring back Iseult the Fair.

[*Exit* SIR KAY HEDIUS.]

Enter ISEULT OF BRITTANY.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Where is my brother ?

TRISTRAM. He has gone, Iseult,

Far off to fetch a sage, who, skilled in herbs,

Alone can heal my wound.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. I go to pray

For a safe journey and a swift return.

SCENE III

Hall in Castle at Carhaix.

GRISELDA. My Lord still sleeps.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Oh ! It fares ill with him.

He has not bid us bear him to the beach,

Whence all day long he gazed upon the sea.

GRISELDA. He is too weary.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Weary, too, am I.

My heart, too, has been poisoned with a wound.

GRISELDA. What wound ?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. My heart is full of bitter hate,
And with a great desire to be avenged.

GRISELDA. On whom ?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Griselda, dark is my despair !
'Twas bitter when I feared he loved me not,
But oh ! the greater bitterness I taste
Now, that I know my utmost fear was true !
I loved him so. And who is there on earth
Who could have given him greater love than I ?
I hoped, I dreamed that he could love me too.
And cold is the awakening from that dream !

GRISELDA. Thy grief has made thee wild.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Hush, hush, he wakes !

TRISTRAM. See you the white sail ?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. On the wide grey sea
There is no sail.

TRISTRAM. My wound, my wound is sore.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Sleep, Tristram, sleep ; soon will
the ship be here.

TRISTRAM. I have just slept. I dreamed a wondrous
dream

Of a cool orchard walled about with air,
And watered by a rippling silver stream.
See you no sail ?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Upon the wide grey sea
There is no sail.

TRISTRAM. I dreamed that on the grass
I lay, and listened to a summer song,
Softer than any song the minstrel sings.
See you no ship ?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. The sea is calm and still.
As far as the sky-line there is no sail.

TRISTRAM. All day, all night, strange visions visit me ;
I dreamed that I was sailing in a ship,
On a hot summer noon, and called for water,
And in a silver cup they brought me wine ;

It seemed so cool, but ah ! it was not cool,
But hot and bitter, I can taste it still.
Oh, will the fiery fumes not melt away ?
Will nothing cool the fever in my brain ?
Will nothing stay the aching in my heart ?
Alas ! alas ! it was a poisoned wound.
Look ! Haply now across the sea there comes
The ship that bears the herb to heal my wound.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Out of the west a little breeze has
sprung.

TRISTRAM. Hark ! I can hear the tinkling of a bell !
O faëry chime, I recognise thy voice ;
It is the music of Avilion's Isle,
The wizard bell I gave unto my friend ;
Glad is the heart of him who hears that bell.
A shining light has filled the lampless world !
Feel you the fragrance of the breeze ? The ship !
The ship ! I hear the motion of the sail ;
I hear the bubbling of the flying foam.
The ship has come with sunlight and with song
To bring me life.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. 'Tis true : around the cliff
A ship is coming and is running swift
Upon the beach.

TRISTRAM. Oh, look ! look at the sail !
Is the sail white ? Can you not see the sail ?

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. I see the sail, for they have hauled
it high.

Tristram, the sail is black.

TRISTRAM (*turning to the wall*). Now I can live
No more. Iseult my life ! Iseult my death !
Iseult !

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. What have I done ? Speak, Tris-
tram ! Speak !

What have I done ? Griselda ! come to me.
Tristram is dead !

Enter GRISELDA *and* KNIGHTS.

GRISELDA. Woe ! Woe ! Tristram is dead !
Let the bells toll. Tristram the brave, the true ;
Tristram is dead ! The peerless Knight ! Woe ! Woe !

Enter DUKE *and* DUCHESS.

ISEULT OF BRITTANY. Do not come near me : leave
me to my grief !

[KNIGHTS *carry the body of* TRISTRAM *and lay it*
on a bier. They spread a rich cloth over it,
and lay his sword on it. ISEULT OF BRITTANY
kneels down by the bier.

DUKE. O faithful Tristram ! No one in the world
Has ever served his King as you served me.

[*Bells toll.*

Enter ISEULT OF CORNWALL.

ISEULT OF CORNWALL. Tristram, where is he ?

[*She walks up to* TRISTRAM'S *body.*
(*To* ISEULT OF BRITTANY.) Lady, go you hence
And let me come. I have the greater right
To weep upon his body, for I loved him
More than you loved him. [*Turning to the east.*

God receive my soul.

[ISEULT OF CORNWALL *lies down by the side of*
TRISTRAM, kisses his mouth and his face,
and, clasping him closely, gives up her soul.

MAHASENA

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

*“Ihr führt ins Leben uns hinein,
Ihr lasst den Armen schuldig werden.”*

GOETHE.

●

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MAHASENA. (*The King of the Island of Lanka.*)

MAHINDA. (*A Prophet.*)

VIRATA.

SUGRIVA. (*A Warrior.*)

YASSA. (*The King's Minister.*)

TISSA. (*A Courtier.*)

CHANDRA BAI.

ANOULA. (*Wife of Sugriva.*)

PRITHA. (*Chandra's Serving Woman.*)

PRIESTS, WARRIORS, ETC.

The action takes place in the Island of Lanka.

ACT I

The Palace of MAHASENA. On the right is a flight of steps leading up to a throne. On the left a flight of steps leading to a temple. In the centre a terrace looking out on to the garden.

Enter MAHINDA.

TISSA. Whom seek you in the Palace of the King ?

MAHINDA. From the calm summits of untrampled snow
I come, from voiceless caves and unvisited haunts,
Where for long years in vigil and stern fast
I communed with the silence of my soul.
To-night the moon is full ; you celebrate
The feast-day of the sacred blossoming bough ;
The ancient rite. From distant lands I come
To bring the worship of a heart made pure
And proved by cloudless years of ecstasy.

TISSA. Welcome. Thou art a prophet wise and holy ;
Whom seekest thou ?

MAHINDA. I seek the King.

TISSA. He comes.

MAHINDA. Leave me with him ; of old he knoweth me.
[Exit TISSA.]

Enter MAHASENA.

MAHINDA. Hail, Mahasena ! Hail !

MAHASENA. Thy face I know not,
Yet welcome.

MAHINDA. Draw thou near to me and look ;
I am Mahinda, whom thou knew'st of old.
But the long, solemn years have shrunk my form.

MAHASENA. Mahinda ! Hail, thou man of saintliness.
Most blessed be this day of thy return.

MAHINDA. Draw near, my son, and let me scan thy face.

MAHASENA. Give me thy blessing.

MAHINDA (*looking at him*). Changed, and yet the same !
The same as when in the dark, troubled years,
Thou, like the lightning from a cloud, didst fall ;
Thou, with the flowing locks and face of gold,
With lion-shoulders and mild lotus eye ;—
Thou, void of passion, with all virtue blest,
Boldest among the bold in the field of war,
Sedate and seeking still the holy path,
Taught by the elders in our ancient rite ;
Thou, who with voice of pealing thunder spakest
Among a doubtful people, Priest and pattern,
Of Law and Duty in the blighted land ;—
Think now upon the day of thine anointment,
When people from the Island's confines came
To celebrate the rite and share the feast.

MAHASENA. What of that day ?

MAHINDA. When the long rolling tide
Of joyful tribes uplifted loud their voices,
I spoke a gentle message to thy heart ;
Hast thou forgotten ? “ Child,” I said to thee,
“ Child, whose great heart is made of tested gold,
Thou to thy darkened people hast brought light,
Thou in their hearts hast kindled a spark divine ;
Through thee thy race will be reborn, and cleansed
With fire, but thou thyself must find new birth,
And by the roads of anguish climb to peace.”

MAHASENA. You speak in riddles.

MAHINDA. On that ominous day
There grew three branches on the bamboo-tree.
Two branches green ; the third branch shone like flame.

MAHASENA. A sword of fire.

MAHINDA. Who is the enemy

Whom thou must wound with it ?

MAHASENA. I know of none.

MAHINDA. Thou art the foe. That sword must pierce
thy heart.

Eternally the wound shall bleed, yet thou

Through mists of pain shall see the face of peace.

MAHASENA. Give me thy blessing, Father, as of old.

MAHINDA. I cannot, for a spirit stays my hand ;

Yet will I bless thee when the hour is come.

MAHASENA. I need thy blessing now.

MAHINDA. I cannot bless thee.

Farewell.

MAHASENA. Stop, Father ! heavy is my heart ;

I need thine aid and guidance, and more greatly

I need thy comfort ; hearken to my tale ;

Heed my distress—my heart cries out to thee—

Desert me not.

MAHINDA. I cannot give thee aid ;—

Not yet. For thou, unaided and alone,

Must find the way.

MAHASENA. Thou dost withhold thy help !

Refusest blessing and desertest me !

Yield to my prayer, have pity, heed my tale,

Hear me.

MAHINDA. I cannot till the hour be come.

Farewell.

MAHASENA. Oh ! thou dost wrong to leave me thus,

In my sore trouble to abandon me.

MAHINDA. My help could not avail. It is too
late

To help thee, and too soon.

[*Exit MAHINDA.*

MAHASENA.

He speaks the truth.

It is too late. Ah ! woe is me, too late.

[Music is heard. Women are heard singing.]

*Like far-seen palms in the desert air,
Like phantom isles hung over the seas,
Like glistening haze in the noontide's glare,
Or webs of silver on twilight trees :
So thou seemest, a film of light,
A baseless dream which at dawn must die ;
Like dew of the morn or the snowflake bright,—
Child of the moon descend from the sky.*

*Come, for the darkness has risen from earth,
And the moon has breathed on the sleeping sea ;
We are weary of toil, we are sated with mirth,
We are fain to dream, and our dream is of thee.
The moon and the stars and the lotus flower,
The lilies and dusk are of no avail,
For thou art the dream of the twilight hour
And lotus and lily, O fair ! O frail !*

MAHASENA. They hymn thee, Chandra, daughter of the moon,

And the pale silver passion of thy rays
Descends upon me, blinding me with bliss,
And drives away the darkness from my soul.
There is no turning back. The fruit is ripe,
And I must pluck, must taste of it, or die.

[Exit MAHASENA.]

Enter MAHINDA and Chorus of Women still singing.

MAHINDA. For whom, O women, make ye melody ?

PRITHA. For Chandra, once the wife of Moggoli.

MAHINDA. I knew him not.

PRITHA. A fearless man of war.
He fell when Mahasena freed the Isle
From the wild tribes.

MAHINDA. A youth ?

PRITHA. No, ripe in years.

MAHINDA. And Chandra mourns him still ?

PRITHA. Two years she mourned ;
But now, though sad her heart, her tears are dry ;
Hast thou not seen her ?

MAHINDA. No, a stranger I.

PRITHA. Thou shalt behold her at the rise of moon,
She goes to listen to the solemn rite.

MAHINDA. She is but young ?

PRITHA. Chandra is still a child,
Yet envious years would weigh on her in vain ;—
She is not wrought of perishable clay,
But of some delicate essence thin and rare,
Some texture whereof iris-dews are made,
Or wings of dragon-flies, or petals of foam,
Or the frail, iridescent, floating shell.
In vain we liken her to star or flower ;
Fairer is she than earthly semblances,
She is a spirit wandered from the moon ;—
A sigh, a melody made palpable.
She moves as though she floated on the flowers,
And the earth seems to fawn beneath her feet.
And the sky seems to crown her as a Queen.
But see, she comes.

[MAHINDA and the Women withdraw.]

Enter CHANDRA and ANOULA.

ANOULA. The full moon rises o'er the quiet sea,
The flutes are silent, for the rite begins ;
'Tis late.

CHANDRA. I go not to the festival.
Here, on the terrace, will I rest awhile
And listen to the melody. You go ?

ANOULA. I will remain with you.

CHANDRA. My heart is sad.
Two years ago this day my husband fell.

ANOULA. Loved you him greatly, Chandra ?

CHANDRA. As a child
Loves what to her is virtue, glory, strength ;
I loved him for his courage, and my heart
Seemed to be stricken by a freezing blight
The day they brought me news that he had fallen
Upon the battlefield.

ANOULA. How chanced his death ?

CHANDRA. His death was strange.

ANOULA. Fell he not in the fight ?

CHANDRA. No, when the fight was over and foes had fled,
He sought the mountains.

ANOULA. To pursue the foe ?

CHANDRA. Alone at night, nor bade his troop farewell,
Nor told the King. His purpose none could guess.
Perchance to see if remnants of the foe
Still lurked.

ANOULA. And then ?

CHANDRA. He never more returned ;
'Tis all I know ; and after many days
They found his body.

ANOULA. Wounded ?

CHANDRA. Pierced with wounds.
The Captains said he sought death willingly
Seeking the hills. And yet I cannot think
He wished to die.

ANOULA. Chandra, you suffered much.
You loved and suffered ; but I never loved.

They wed me to Sugriva, when a child ;
He loved me not, and soon his lack of love
Was turned to hate, and he tormenteth me.
My life is bitter, I return his hate ;
But what availeth hatred against might ?

CHANDRA. A grievous tale.

ANOULA. Alas ! that is not all
Dark-eyed Virata came to comfort me ;
He sang me sweet, sad songs of hopeless love ;
And on the day he sought the battlefield,
He told me he had vowed to meet with death
For love of me. I bade him live and love ;
My heart was full. I could not check the word.

CHANDRA. I pity you. It bodes no good, Anoula.
Yet Mahasena loves to praise his heart.

ANOULA. Men say the King oft seeks to talk with you.

CHANDRA. 'Tis idle speech.

ANOULA. Is the King all he seems ?

CHANDRA. And more ; he is as true as he is great—
Brave, wise, and good ; the noblest of all men.

ANOULA. You love the King.

CHANDRA. True things I love, and fair.

ANOULA. Yet, if you loved a man and in him found
All virtues, and the idol were to fall—
His fair fame tarnished—would you love him still ?

CHANDRA. If I loved one for truth or bravery,
And he proved false or cowardly or base,
I from my bleeding heart would tear the love,
And trample on it like a festering weed.

ANOULA. Your heart is made of unrelenting ice ;
I, loving, for his whole self love a man,
And naught could then deceive me ; if he stooped
To baseness, as strange flaws may haply lurk
In brightest rubies, my unconquered love

Would like an ocean rise to wash the stain.
 Even though the flaw be deep and past all healing,
 The ruby still a blood-red ruby shines ;
 The man is still the man I loved and love ;
 Because I gave his glory all my praise,
 Must I refuse my pity to his shame ?
 Then, more than ever, would he need my love,
 And then most rich would its abundance be.

CHANDRA. If I loved one who seemed to me all bright,
 And found the gem was false, the gold mere clay,
 Not him, nor yet myself, could I forgive.

ANOULA. I would not love false gold or lying gems ;
 Yet if I found commingled with the metal
 Thin streaks of baser clay, it would not prove
 Gold to be tinsel, nor destroy my love.

CHANDRA. The man you speak of is a living lie.

ANOULA. You have no knowledge of the deeps of love.

CHANDRA. My love must rise like worship to a god.

ANOULA. Ah ! prayer is cold, your heart a tranquil
 temple ;

But mine is like a black and seething pool.

CHANDRA. My love could equal yours in strength.

ANOULA. Divine
 You are and pure ; but I of earthly clay
 Am fashioned.

CHANDRA. No, Anoula, I am frail.

ANOULA. But see, the rite is ended, and the King
 Comes hither. I must hasten. Fare you well.

[*Exit* ANOULA.]

Enter MAHASENA.

MAHASENA. I bring thee branches from the sacred shrine.

CHANDRA. I thank thee with a lowly and humble heart.

MAHASENA. Nay, thank me not, make not obeisance :

Thou stand'st and every man must kneel to thee,
Lady of moonlight and the splendid snow ;
Lady, I kneel.

CHANDRA. Thou puttest me to shame.

MAHASENA. I have come hither from the sacred rite,
But with a heedless ear I heard the chants,
And watched with vacant eyes the leaping fires ;
For brighter than the blazing sacrifice
Before me shone the stillness of thine eyes,
And purer than the whiteness of the flames
I breathed the fragrance of thy spotless soul.
Chandra, with humble heart and bended head,
I bring to thee but my mortality,
Yet tried, and rendered strong with love of thee.
Wilt thou ascend to glorify my throne ?
And share my crown, my kingdom, and my life ?

CHANDRA. Is this the truth ? or but a lying dream ?

MAHASENA. Bend down and listen to my beating heart.

CHANDRA. Ofttimes in dreams I saw a lordly spirit,
With glistening sandals and a sword of light ;
His heart of snow shone through his fiery eyes,
And, Mahasena, that bright face was thine.

MAHASENA. O miracle ! O wonder ! O sweet hour !

CHANDRA. Thou wast, it seemed, as far removed from me
As the white cloud upon the mountain-top
Is distant from the lily of the valley.

MAHASENA. O whitest of the lilies of the valley !
Oh, let me kneel and breathe thy spotless dew !

CHANDRA. Nay, heed : for love which is born suddenly
As swiftly fades away.

MAHASENA. Thou deem'st my love
A sudden, short-lived flower. Through long, sad months
I worshipped thee, nor dared to speak my love.
I loved thee long ago ; at twilight once

I saw thee walking by the dark grey shore ;
The wind was in thy hair, thy floating veil
Fluttered and seemed as though 'twould melt like dew
Upon the radiant rose-leaves of thy limbs.
I had not dreamed that there could breathe such beauty ;
I gazed with blinded eyes, and a great wave
Stunned me and bore me on a rushing tide ;
I thought that I had died, until I knew
That I had just been born.

CHANDRA. I pray thee, cease :
Such speech doth wound my soul. O King, I know
Thy heart is in a holy space. Dark wings
Have ne'er disturbed its silent, radiant air.
Speak not as meaner men, whose hearts are swayed
By fitful passions.

MAHASENA. I am but a man—
Oh, let me love thee with a mortal's love ;
For love methinks is so divine a thing
That it exalts the heart of humblest clay ;
My heart is but a vessel of base earth,
But it is filled with holy fire, it glows
Like the dark beryl, and soft spirit hands
Bear it aloft and lay it at thy feet.
How can I find meet words to tell to thee
What is at once so tender and so strong ?
Words bright and pure and deep enough for thee ;
How does the sea speak to the rising moon ?

CHANDRA. I heard such words but once, and in a
dream ;
As silent as a dream the garden shines,
Save where between dark trees the fountains splash.

MAHASENA. My love is like those silver, sobbing streams.

CHANDRA. Far-off the listless lapping of the tide
Whispers the secret of the boundless sea.

MAHASENA. My words shall creep towards thee like soft foam.

CHANDRA. Upon the pool, like ghosts, the shadowy swans
Move to and fro among the floating flowers.

MAHASENA. For ever round the lotus that is thee
My soul shall circle like a shadowy swan.

CHANDRA. Hark ! to the dying echo of a bell.

MAHASENA. It is the solemn midnight hour, oh, hear ;
I swear to love and guard and honour thee
With constant and imperishable love ;
Thou art the light, the music, of my life,
And, deaf and blind, I can but follow thee.

CHANDRA. I swear to love thee in eternity.
Be witness, moon and stars and infinite night,
And rolling worlds and this our ample earth ;
All mortals and immortals and dark spirits,
All rangers of the forests, and all gods !
Be thou my stronghold, my impregnable tower ;
Hide and protect me with thy wide-winged soul,
And let me lean upon thy fiery sword.
Be thou the dazzling diamond of my life,
Unclouded by the breath of any shame :
Harder than adamant, as crystal clear,
Invariable and steadfast as the sun ;
My Lord ! My King ! O heart of fire and snow !

ACT II

SCENE I

Chamber in Sugriva's Palace.

ANOULA. The lagging hours creep on, and still the stars
Are white. Oh, will the morning never come ?
The summer lightning flickers in the sky ;
The parched and languid creeper yearns for dew ;
The uneasy tide awaits the ruffling breeze
That comes with trembling gold-flakes from the east,
The east from whence my sun shall rise and shine.
O daylight, come, and bring my heart's desire !
The moon rose and the four white polar stars.
I slumbered all alone and could not sleep ;
All night I heard the curlew's piercing cry ;
My heart awaked, kept watch, and watched in vain.
At last ! the lamp's flame flickers and grows pale,
And through the lattice steals a breath of fragrance—
A faint streak glimmers in the sad grey east.

[Outside a voice is heard singing.]

*The day breaks and the darkness taketh flight,
The north wind blows upon the rippling sea ;
My locks are dripping with the dews of night.
My Dawn, my Daylight, open thou to me !*

*The spices of thy garden fill the air,
The blossom glistens on thine apple tree ;
Sweeter than spice art thou, than flowers more fair.
My Dew, my Blossom, open thou to me !*

*Come, let us seek the mountains of the myrrh,
The hills of frankincense, the fragrant sea,
The north wind blows, the leaves, the water stir.
My Dove, my Springtide, open thou to me !*

Enter VIRATA.

ANOULA. At last thou comest. I have waited long ;
All night I slept not, for my heart kept watch.

VIRATA. I feared thy warning words, I durst not come.

ANOULA. Sugriva sought the hills at set of sun.

VIRATA. My sleepless soul, too, sought thee in the night
And found thee not ; but it has found thee now.
Oh, let me hear thy voice, and touch thy hand,
And drink the light of thy great brooding eyes !

ANOULA. Thou art most peerless among men, thy head
Is like fine gold ; oh, like the sun thine eyes
Dazzle ; thou shinest like the flaming forest,
Like sunlight on the boundless barley fields
And winter's golden rice. Spread over me
The folds of the great banner of thy love.

VIRATA. O fair, thy lips are like the honeycomb,
And sweeter than all spices is thy kiss.

ANOULA. Oh, turn away the lightnings of thine eyes,
They overcome me, and my spirit faints.

VIRATA. Then hush thy voice, for like a poisoned arrow
It wounds my heart with sweet and bitter pain.

ANOULA. Oh, turn away thine eyes !

VIRATA. Then hush thy voice ;
Nay, rather speak, and never cease to speak,
And let the poison run through all my veins ;
For it is sweet, oh, passing sweet !

ANOULA. Then turn
Thine eyes towards me, let their lightnings blind me !
Oh, love, how wondrous is this love of mine ;

More vehement than fire and dark as death.

VIRATA. O love, O brightest, O delight of mine eyes,
My heart is full, and well-nigh breaks for joy !

ANOULA. Yet woven with my bliss are threads of sorrow.

VIRATA. Tell me thy grief, and I will drive it hence.

ANOULA. My grief is closely woven with my joy,
Such overwhelming bliss is fraught with pain ;
Sorrow is mingled with the wine of joy.
And Fate and Fear are watching over my love.

VIRATA. Thou fearest whom or what ? Perchance
Sugriva ?

ANOULA. I fear no mortal, but our very love
Is terrible, for it is like the sea ;
For it is like the treasonable sea,
That gleams afar, smooth as a polished sapphire ;
Yet shakes the adventurous ship with buffeting waves ;
Bitter and salt, and wild with hissing foam,
And its mysterious deeps are full of death.

VIRATA. Then let us float upon the glassy surface,
Lulled by the whisper of its summer sound.

ANOULA. My joy is very sad, and very sweet
My sorrow. I will perish in love's sea.
Among the pearls, among the oozy forests,
I shall not hear its music any more.
I will forget. Sweet will such shipwreck be.
No, no, I will remember ; I will live
And taste again my bitter, dark delight.
My joy is sad ; but sweet, sweet is my sorrow.

VIRATA. See, the glad sunshine through the lattice shines.

ANOULA. Alas ! begone ! flee swiftly, lest Sugriva
Should find thee here.

VIRATA. I care not if he comes ;
I cannot live throughout the endless day.
I scarce have come and thou wilt drive me hence.

ANOULA. My heart is faint with fear ; I pray thee go.
Last night a shadow veiled the rising moon,
And in the darkness, while I watched alone,
I saw a funeral pyre. My love, begone.

VIRATA. I will not go ; close by thee will I stay,
And hold thy hands and kiss thy delicate hands,
And crush with kisses thy soft flower-like eyes,
And drink the honey of thy scarlet lips
Unto the end, and blind thee with my kiss.

ANOULA. Oh, kill me with thy kisses, let me die !
Thou who hast given me light and life and joy,
Take back the other gifts and give me Death.
All other death would be a meaner thing,
Such death were greater than all joys of life ;
Now, with the last pang of thy last wild kiss
To sleep and wake no more ! Love, give me Death.
O beautiful, O beloved, O my love !

VIRATA. O brightest, without spot ! All fair ! O fairest !
[*Noise is heard without.*]

ANOULA. Sugriva ?

VIRATA. Do not fear. The hour of freedom !
[*Exit VIRATA.*]

[*A clash of swords is heard.*]

ANOULA. They fight ! Immortal gods, protect Virata !
[*Pause. ANOULA listens.*]

Enter VIRATA.

Saved ! and Sugriva ?

VIRATA. Straight into his heart
My sword has plunged.

ANOULA. Oh, evil hour ! Dark fate !
Virata, knowst thou Mahasena's law ?
"Thou shalt not kill, and he who kills must die."
What wilt thou do, Virata ? Thou must flee.

VIRATA. I shall not flee ; straightway I'll seek the King
And tell him all my tale ; and he shall judge.
And, if needs be, Anoula, I shall die.

ANOULA. I will to Chandra and implore thy pardon.

SCENE II

Chamber in Mahasena's Palace.

ANOULA. And now that I have poured out all my grief,
I feel that words are vain ; yet on my knees
Once more my hopeless heart shall cry to thee
To grant my prayer, to plead, to win his pardon.
So wild is my distress, I find no words.

CHANDRA. Deep is my pity, great must be thy sorrow
That thou shouldst thus have caused thy husband's death.
Ah, piteous fate ! How swiftly thou hast met
With pitiless retribution ; yet methinks
The punishment has wiped away all sin.

Enter MAHASENA.

ANOULA. Hear me, O King, for Chandra hears but heeds
not ;
Hear me, and comfort me in my despair !
For by thy law Virata must be slain.
It is not true ; oh, say this cannot be !
They say Sugriva was a noble man ;
They nothing know, they nothing understand.
I, when a child, was given to Sugriva ;
He loved me not, his love soon turned to hate.
He plagued me like a fiend with blows, and words
More sharp than any blows. And had I prayed
Virata, whom I loved, to set me free,
The blame had been but small ; I prayed him not.

They met in fight ; Sugriva was far famed
For deeds of arms and in fair fight he fell.
Yet now they say Virata did foul murder !
If there be any justice in the world,
If there be any equity in thee,
Thou canst not let Virata be condemned.
My words are feeble ; King, I have no skill,
But let me die if this is not the truth.
Oh, save Virata ; oh, have mercy, King !

MAHASENA. Child, I believe thy tale ; I understand
Thy sorrow ; I will strive to save him. Go.

ANOULA (*flings herself at his feet*). I kiss thy feet, my
shield and my defence.

[ANOULA *walks on to the terrace as if to go ; she
pauses and listens to the King's words, and
then disappears behind the columns.*

CHANDRA. Why givest thou false comfort ? It is cruel
To kindle fruitless hopes. Thou knowest well
Virata's doom.

MAHASENA. Virata must be saved ;
He met, he slew Sugriva in fair fight.
It was no murder, and no coward's act.

CHANDRA. I grieve for her ; yet how canst thou, as King,
O'erlook the crime ?

MAHASENA. Such is the voice of reason ;
But can thy woman's heart not understand
That blood for blood is but a cruel law ?
I strive to frame new laws of right and truth.

CHANDRA. Thou spakest ever of necessity,
How retribution followed every crime.

MAHASENA. But in Virata's deed there is no crime ;
He slew Sugriva in fair fight, and men
Have done worse things than he for those they loved,
And yet proved guiltless in the eyes of heaven.

Canst thou not conjure up a force of love
Impelling man to any dreadful deed
For one he loved ? And from necessity
Virata acted, and to save Anoula.

CHANDRA. All things but these, thy words, I understand.
This stirs my wonder even that thou, the King,
Who framed the rigid laws of purity
And punishment, whose life in daylight shone
A stainless pattern for all men to follow ;—
Who didst enforce thy laws by sword and sceptre,
Shouldst now, when flagrantly the law is broken,
Talk of the fruitless cruelty of laws.

MAHASENA. Be it right or wrong, Virata shall not die.
I marvel at the hardness of thy heart.

CHANDRA. I am not hard ; and yet I am the spouse
Of him who preached the sanctity of life
And purity of living. Of thy task,
Thy kingly work, I speak, and disregard
My woman's heart.

MAHASENA. Virata shall not die.

[He walks on to the terrace.]

Enter YASSA.

YASSA. I seek the King.

CHANDRA. Strange is the King to-day !

YASSA. Is he resolved to save Virata still ?

CHANDRA. He seems to hold him guiltless, and the deed
No crime.

YASSA. The judges and the priests must judge
Virata ; and his penalty is death.

[MAHASENA comes forward.]

MAHASENA. Take order that Virata be released.

YASSA. I swear to thee, O King, thy thought is folly ;
The warriors and the priests are met to judge him ;

And all condemn Sugriva's death ; all curse
Virata's name. Sugriva of all thy captains
Was honoured as the mightiest of the brave,
And had he slain Virata he had reaped
Small blame ; but that Virata should be freed
Will strike the people with amazement dumb ;
“ What need,” they'll say, “ what need of any laws,
If only to be slighted they are made ? ”

MAHASENA. It is enough. Virata shall not die.
I have good reasons ; ye shall hear them now.
It was a fatal hour when long ago
I, for the first time, gazed upon thee, Chandra ;
Thy beauty overwhelmed and dazzled me ;
And in that hour a seed of fire was dropped
Within my heart, and soon through all my veins
It raged like poison and destroyed my soul ;
Love, strongest of things mortal, overpowered me ;
Fateful and bitter and remorseless love.
I swore no earthly thing should hinder me
From making thee my wife. We went to battle
To drive the rebels from the hills ; thy husband
Went with me and gave heed to my commands ;
And when the battle ceased, nor he nor I
Had taken hurt. A straggler brought me word
At nightfall, that some rebels still lay hid
Among the rocks. I sought thy husband's tent ;
I bade him seek the rocky hills, and see
If any remnant of the foe still lived ;
He thought there was no peril in the task.
He said that he would seek the hills alone ;
I bade him go.

CHANDRA. To scour the hills alone ?
What meanest thou ? No, not that thou didst hope
That he might die ?

MAHASENA. I bade him seek the hills ;
He said that he would seek the hills alone.
I bade him go. I knew the hidden peril.
Thou say'st I hoped that he might die ? I knew
That he would die ; I sent him to his death.
I knew I could not win thee otherwise,
Thou, chaste as dew and colder than the moon !

CHANDRA. O Powers of Heaven, have pity on my heart !
My Lord is mad ; Yassa, the King is mad !
Or I am mad.

MAHASENA. No, hear me to the end—
I waited until time had healed thy sorrow,
And then I wedded thee ; and therefore I,
In my great guilt, refuse to slay Virata,
Who, side by side with me, is innocent.
Chandra——

CHANDRA. Is dead ; you speak with her in vain.

MAHASENA. No, you shall hear me. 'Tis not now alone
Because of this, my crime, that I make haste
To save Virata. I to the great hall
Will go, where the high elders now are met.
Before them all will I reveal the truth ;
And if they wish, I die ; and if they wish,
I will throw dust upon my head and seek
The hills, an outcast ; or, if knowing all,
They still desire the guidance of my hand,
I will remain upon my lofty throne,
For I have ruled them as a goodly King.
And what I was I am ; if there was aught
To praise in me, it lives and cannot die.
I cannot feel remorse because my love,
Like poison, seized my senses and my will,
And thus enslaved, I caused thy husband's death.
Let Mahadeo feel remorse, not I.

He breathed his spirit through the trackless space,
And bade the myriad orbs of flame whirl round
And melt and harden into worlds, and rot
And fester into growth and living things ;
Things subtly fashioned to feel pain and groan,
Which live but by devouring one another,
And chiefest and most piteous of them, man.
The souls of men are prisoned in weak flesh,
And bound to fiery wheels of fate, and thrown
Into the world to spin, like whirling tops
That children lash to madness. And each soul
Is a pure portion of the mind of God ;
Flesh is the rack of God on which He tries
With torments the pure essence of His fire ;
And though man dies, the tired soul cannot die :
It wanders through the rolling centuries
From man to beast, from beast again to man,
Wakeful in man and slumbering in the beast,
And never finds forgetfulness at last.
And as each man, by reason of his soul,
Is God, he, through his flesh, is likewise beast—
A beast for ever tracked by circumstance,
And hunted unto deadly traps of sin
That bite on him with cruel torturing teeth ;—
Thus, caught and helpless, in the net of Fate,
Compelled by hidden powers to live and sin,
He yet must pay the price of sin in pain.
Therefore, I, knowing that I pay that price,
Say that remorse is not for me. I wrought
Great deeds and good ; I was not better then
Than any man. I wrought a hateful crime !
No worse was I. All men are made alike,
The difference lies but in the differing blows
Dealt by the hands of blindfold circumstance.

And though I needs must expiate my crime,
 I fall not on my knees, nor bow, nor cringe
 With tears and pleading. I am but a man.
 I fashioned not the boundless universe ;
 Let Him who made it for His sport, and breathed
 His soul in many myriad earthly atoms,
 Burn with remorse ; past mending is His deed.
 Not all the dews of death can wipe away
 The stain of life ; no bliss of Paradise
 Can compensate for life and all its pain :—
 Come down to earth and dwell upon the world ;
 If Thou wouldst make amends let drop the souls
 That Thou hast fashioned in the dark abyss
 Of nothingness, and let them be no more !
 Or if there must be life, then give to man
 The light of spirits or the utter dark,
 The stupefied content of thoughtless beasts.
 Set the soul free, or quench it utterly.
 Therefore I say, Virata, if he sinned,
 And I who sinned, are but as every man,
 No better and no worse ; and I say more :
 As virtue is its own reward, so sin
 Bears in itself its meed of punishment.
 Man need add nothing ; if there must be laws,
 Call them expedient, call them not divine,
 Nor in the name of false divinity
 Mete punishment. Give pity in its stead
 For every atom that lives anywhere,
 And living, can but groan. I bid you speak.
 Am I a worthy King ? I go to ask ;—
 The people shall reply.

YASSA.

This shall not be ;
 Thou shalt not leave this hall ; this cannot be.
 Thou canst not overturn a people's faith,

And break their idol and destroy their trust.
There would be no more faith in right and truth,
No more obedience unto any law.

MAHASENA. Chandra, speak thou.

CHANDRA. I have no words to speak.
Oh, see you not that I am dumb and blind,
Senseless and dead ? Above me and beneath
Is nothingness. The universe has crumbled.
Stay ! Heed ! It is not true : my words are false.
Nothing is fallen, nothing is dark, the world,
The ordered universe is in its place,
And only thou art fallen ! Thou most mean !
Most miserable !—

MAHASENA. Cease, I go to speak.

CHANDRA. To ease thy conscience and to make amends !
To live hereafter with an easy heart !

YASSA. Rather than thou shouldst go and tell this tale,
I'll draw my sword and kill thee where thou standest ;
This cannot be.

MAHASENA. Strike ! gladly would I die !

CHANDRA. Yes, thou wouldst die, and from thy shameful
life

Flee like a renegade. O coward soul !
All are prepared to face extremest pain
Save Mahasena !

MAHASENA. All thy taunts are vain ;
It is no coward fear that prompts my speech.

CHANDRA. If I can make the supreme sacrifice
To live in spite of all, thy wife, with thee,
If I can do this, canst thou not achieve
One slender sacrifice ?

MAHASENA. Then let him die ;
I wish no longer to reveal the truth,
Seeing that men are blind, and tender women

Have hearts of ice and iron. I will go
And climb the temple steps and don my crown,
And cry aloud, " People, acclaim your King ! "

*Enter ANOULA, who rushes up to MAHASENA and
falls on her knees.*

ANOULA. King, I have heard, I understand thy soul !
And never nobler seemedst thou to me
Than when thou didst unfold thy bitter tale.
Oh, find a way to spare Virata's life !

ACT III

SCENE I

A room in Mahasena's Palace.

PRITHA. The clarions sound, the dark procession winds
With pipe and drum and noise of trampling hoofs
Into the Court, and now the King has come ;
He mounts the throne. The drums and clarions cease.
The crowd is breathless.

CHANDRA. Has Virata come ?

PRITHA. They lead him bound ! he walks with a firm
step ;
He flinches not. They halt before the King.

CHANDRA. What does the King ?

PRITHA. He gazes on Virata ;
Virata turns his head away from him,
Doubtless his guilty eyes avoid that gaze—
The King's pure fearless eyes. Virata kneels.

CHANDRA. And the King ?

PRITHA. Paler than Virata he ;
For doubtless pity fills his kindly heart ;
And now the steel blade flashes.

CHANDRA. Cease, be still !
It is enough. O maidens, I am sick
And faint with horror.

PRITHA. Hark, the trumpet sounds !
[*The exultant cry of the people is heard from outside.*]
Now all is over, and the guilty man
Has paid his debt.

Enter ANOULA.

[CHANDRA makes a sign to PRITHA to withdraw.

[Exit PRITHA.]

ANOULA. O Queen, make haste to come,
 They march Virata to the Palace Court ;
 The guards forbade me access to the King,
 I could not pass. Sweet Chandra, haste to come
 Or it will be too late ; he must not die ;
 Thou, at the last, canst surely win his pardon.
 Thou answerest nothing. Speak ! [Pause.

It is too late ?

They've killed him ? [Pause.

Answer, answer, speak to me !

CHANDRA. I heard the trumpet sound a second time.

[Pause.

ANOULA. Too late ! I pray you, Chandra, look at me ;
 I am as calm as statues carved in stone.
 It is all over. I will weep no tears,
 Nor rend my hair and garments. It is well
 For him, my love, my light, my joy, my life ;—
 But for thy wretched husband and for thee
 It is not well. Your grief is yet to come—
 Your grief and my revenge. I curse you both.
 Farewell, and take my curse. [Exit ANOULA.

Enter MAHASENA.

MAHASENA (to CHANDRA). The deed is done ;
 I spoke no word ; thy wish has been fulfilled ;
 I ask thee not for pardon or for pity,
 Yet help me, Chandra, help me to endure,
 Help me to live.

CHANDRA. You do beseech in vain.

MAHASENA. Rightly they named you daughter of the moon :

Heartless and cold.

CHANDRA. If you had told me all
Before I wedded you, then, haply then,
I might have understood, I might have pitied ;
But with deceitful cunning you did trade
Upon my faith ! Oh, there are deeds and things
Which freeze the heart and cannot be forgiven.
For you henceforth I am for ever dead,
As you are dead for me. I, whom you see,
Am but a painted mask, an unreal shadow,
A corpse, a ghost. I shall not come to life.

[Exit CHANDRA.

MAHASENA. Shall I crave pardon ? Shall I kneel and
weep ?
I will endure alone, nor seek to find
Pardon or pity.

Enter ANOULA.

ANOULA. Already I have sought you
In vain to-day ; but brief shall be my words.
I hoped unto the last, I could not think
That you could see the slaughter of Virata.
Now words are vain. I wait the festival ;
Upon the day you keep the sacred rite,
I to your loving people will speak clearly ;
And they—I know them ; when Virata died
They say a yell of triumph rent the sky—
They will make haste to tear you limb from limb.

MAHASENA. Do as you will. [Exit ANOULA.

Enter MAHINDA.

MAHASENA. I would that you could read
What in my heart is sealed.

MAHINDA. 'Tis read already.

I know the past, the cause of Moggoli's death,
And all thy piteous tale.

MAHASENA. Anoula swears
To tell that story on the day of feast ;
I shall be killed and win the endless peace.

MAHINDA. Why thinkest thou thy soul shall rise to peace ?

MAHASENA. Because this life is but a lying mist
Which floats upon the ocean of the void ;
Because my soul has paid the price of peace
And nothingness.

MAHINDA. Not thus the soul wins peace,
And nothingness is not. The soul must live,
Until made pure by suffering it flies back
Like a frail spark into the boundless fire,
Which is the mind of God, from whence it came.

MAHASENA. If thus the soul must climb through pain to
peace,
Why must it leave the great tranquillity ?
Why must it undergo the stain of sin
If sin by expiation must be cleansed ?
There is a sorer wound, a sting more sharp
Than that inflicted by remorse's fang :
It is the knowledge that these things must be ;
That there is no escape, that we are bound
And dragged by Fate's unmastered chariot
Along foul paths to end in nothingness !
The unprofitable, fruitless cruelty,
The needlessness of this unending circle
Of sin and its inevitable fruit ;
That man should be constrained to pit himself
Against the Fates, a gamester forced to throw
The dice against his will ; and should he win,
The prize is vanity, and should he lose,
The penalty is shame. All this descends

Upon the soul and loads it with despair.

MAHINDA. Thou art a portion of the eternal law ;
It is in vain to murmur and rebel.

MAHASENA. Thou canst not solve the riddle : I believe
No longer in the glory of the dream,
And ask but for the end.

MAHINDA. O King, O child,
Thine eyes once gazed upon the stainless light ;
A gleam of the immense tranquillity
Shone once in thee ; thou canst not falter now.

MAHASENA. I would die now ; I crave oblivion.
I seek the vastness and the end.

MAHINDA. Not thus
Canst thou attain the vastness.

MAHASENA. Dost thou know
What lies beyond the cheating veil of life ?
Out of the dark we come, methinks we'll find
The night once more ; but be it as it may
I pray for death.

MAHINDA. My child, the stealthy mist
Is still around thy soul, but it will rise.
I cannot prove my words ; but while I lived
In lonely meditation, while the flesh
Still lived, my soul was mingled with the peace,
Absorbed in the eternal mind and will
By ecstasy.

MAHASENA. Such visions are for thee ;
But I am fashioned of a coarser substance.
I shall not steal untimely death ; I leave
My life to fate ; Anoula tells her tale,
The rest be chance.

MAHINDA. And doth Anoula know
That if she spoke the load would from thee fall ?
How death itself is welcome to thee ?

MAHASENA. No,
She shall not know ; she thinks by telling all
To stab me with the deadliest of wounds.
I shall not undeceive her ; and the rest
I leave to chance, which governeth the world.

MAHINDA. The night enfolds thee : but the dawn will
come.

SCENE II

Mahasena's terrace, as in Act I.

CHANDRA. The full moon rises o'er the mountain-
tops.

PRITHA. The King makes ready for the sacred
rite.

Enter MAHASENA.

CHANDRA. You will attend the rite ?

MAHASENA. And likewise you.

CHANDRA. I go not.

MAHASENA. You forget your royal task.
You must be present at the festival.

CHANDRA. Anoula came to me. She swears to keep
Her promise.

MAHASENA. Pity her, poor foolish child,
Whose hope is that by unmasking me to men,
And by my death to taste of sweet revenge.
She could not find a sweeter gift for me
Than bitter death.

CHANDRA. For this poor island's sake
Prevent the deed.

MAHASENA. Much, much you ask of me.
You have refused all pity and all aid.
You bade me drink the bitter wine ; but now

Have I not drunk it to the dregs ? Ah, no !
A drop still lingers in the cup, and you
Now proffer it. O Chandra, heed me well :
If you had granted me one spark of pity,
Then gladly for your sake had I fulfilled
This last supremest sacrifice. But you,
Who took away all hope and power to live,
Wish now to rob me of my death. No, no.
I care not, I shall let Anoula speak.

CHANDRA. Remember there are others in the world
Who call for death and call in vain. Farewell.

[Exit CHANDRA.

[Voices are heard singing.

*Come, for the darkness has risen from earth,
And the moon has breathed on the sleeping sea.
We are weary of toil, we are sated with mirth,
We are fain to dream, and our dream is of thee.
The moon and the stars and the lotus flower
And lilies and dusk are of no avail ;
For thou art the dream of the twilight hour,
And lotus and lily, O fair ! O frail !*

[CHANDRA walks across the stage with her MAIDENS.

MAHASENA. O vision, rising from the heart of night,
Has ever beauty been as this before ?
The moon is hid, but thou, her child, dost breathe
Diviner radiance. Do I live or dream ?
The far-off sea, the mountains and the trees
Are touched, and tremble with the silent spell.
The sky's vault like a molten sapphire glows,
And over the thick billows of the darkness
The stars float like a frail and glistening web.
But light and darkness, stillness and sweet sounds

All seem but as the sighing of a harp
That follows and enfolds a singing voice ;
And thou, O Chandra, art that voice divine—
The holy chime of midnight's harmony,
The blossom of the stillness, and the dream
Of slumbering earth ! The beauty of the world
Is now revealed in thee, O voiceless Song !
Soft star of dew ! Mysterious diadem
Of summer darkness ! Delicate skein of foam
Unravelled on the ocean of the night !
Softly a flood of glory from the moon
Steals to the earth ; the ugly shapes of day
Are hidden ; the tumult and the toil are done ;
Faint music only in the darkness sounds,
Breathing a hymn of beauty to thy name ;
And the great world repeats the rapturous praise.
The sky with all its myriad starry eyes,
The earth with fragrant breath and fleeting sounds,
The sea with its deep throbbing heart. The world
Attuned to harmony seems all divine.
And what am I to scan the drift and purpose
Of the vast whole ? Ah, how can mortal minds
Read the dark riddle ? for the scheme of things
Is vast, and man an atom of the scheme ;
And mighty are the signs of the great plan :
The suns, the whirling stars, the shapes of life
Innumerable, the countless semblances,
The storm, the thunder, and the rushing sea,
The hum of forests and the huge mute plain,
The silence of the unfooted fields of snow ;
Splendour and beauty, harmony and light,
And love and joy, and grief and holy tears.
The goodness that, despite the blows of Fate,
Deserts not man ; and all things brave and fair.

These things are, too, the gifts of life ; they shine
Alone by the close neighbourhood of evil.
And rightly does the soul fly down to earth
And writhe in shuddering flesh to know these things :
By these things to be proved ; if gold be proved not,
We know not it is gold—so with the soul
Perchance ? No man will ever read life's riddle,
But they who cease to question and rebel
Against the universal law ; for these
The riddle will be solved ; perplexity
Will cease for them, as now for me it ceases.
A song that has no music and no sound,
A light has filled my soul and built a bridge
Between infinity and my despair.

Enter ANOULA.

ANOULA. The hour is almost come.

MAHASENA. The full moon shines.

I will go celebrate the solemn rite.

ANOULA. And I come too.

MAHASENA. Yes, you shall come with me.

And if you will, Anoula, tell my tale ;
And if you speak, my sorrow like a cloud
Will rise from off my soul and melt in air.
Ay, if they kill me, death will fall on me
Like long-desired dew on thirsty trees.
And if you speak not, then must I fulfil
The harder task to live, a mask, a show,
And bear the scorn of her, whom once I loved
With the great love that dares the darkest crime.
Thus, solitary, must I live, Anoula.
Do as you will. I tell you the whole truth,
Lest you be cheated of your sweet revenge,
And think that death and public shame were bitter.

Enter MAHINDA and Priests.

[Trumpets sound, the Priests walk up to MAHASENA and clothe him with a white robe and crown.

PEOPLE shout. Long live the King ! Hail, Mahasena, hail !

[MAHASENA walks towards CHANDRA and, looking at her imploringly, he holds out his hand ; she looks away from him and, scarcely touching the tips of his fingers, lets him lead her up into the temple.

MAHINDA. Now is the moment to unfold thy tale.

ANOULA. I spoke with him, and he laid bare his soul.

If I keep silence he will suffer more
Than if I speak ; life is a bitterer thing
Than death to him, and public shame would lift
The burden from his heart. He longs to speak,
To tear away the mask and show the truth.
And though I know that my revenge is greater
By this my deed, it is not from revenge
I hold my peace ; I swear I pity him.
I cannot be the one to tear the mask
And strip his bleeding heart before the crowd.
Let fate and chance deal with him as they may,
I hold my peace now, and for evermore.
I go into the darkness. Fare thee well.

[She stabs herself.

MAHINDA. Anoula has left her sorrow and her care ;
Her soul has sunk into the gentle night.
Peace ! Bear her body gently to her home.

[Beckons to Attendants outside.

[Enter Attendants, who bear away the body.

Enter MAHASENA and CHANDRA.

MAHASENA. Give me thy blessing, Father, as of old.

[He kneels.

MAHINDA. Now can I bless thee, for the hour is come.

MAHASENA. Thou spakest truth, and through the mists of pain,

Although they never rise nor melt away,

I through their veil have seen the face of peace.

(*Rising, to CHANDRA.*) Sorrow will ever be, yet in my soul

There shines a light no sorrow in the world,

Nor shame, disaster, nor the wiles of men

Can quench or stifle ; and my mind has risen

Out of the sea of darkness and the pit ;

And it will ever soar through fields of space,

Until it reach the great tranquillity,

And there dissolve in the unending flame.

The note which in my life will fade away,

The music whence it issued hath no end,

No death, no birth : but like an endless stream

For ever broadens to infinity,

And varies with unvariable law.

And only by submission to the law,

When the consenting soul in concord chimes

With the eternal purpose comes the Light,

And with the light is peace.

Enter Priests and the People.

PEOPLE *shout*. Long live the King !

[MAHASENA *walks towards CHANDRA and leads her to the throne ; she gives him her hand as before with averted eyes, and they ascend the throne together.*



PROSERPINE

A MASQUE

Καὶ ποθήω καὶ μάομαι.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

PROSERPINE. (*Disguised as ROSEMARY.*)

THE PRINCE.

KING PHARAMOND.

THE PRINCESS. (*His Daughter.*)

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

ROSALIND.

HEARTSEASE. (*A Dairymaid.*)

A MONK.

A MERCHANT.

A SOLDIER.

A JUGGLER.

A SHEPHERD.

AN OLD MAN.

A SQUIRE.

SOLDIERS, COURTIERS, MAIDENS, GHOSTS.

Place : Sicily. Time : Indefinite.

ACT I

SCENE I

Sicily. A grove in a cirque of purple mountains. On the left is a Doric temple built of golden-coloured marble. Behind it a large clump of cypress trees. On the right a sloping hill also crowned with cypresses. The grass is bright with anemones and spring flowers.

CHORUS OF MAIDENS *enter right, and cross the stage singing. They are dressed in many-coloured draperies and wear garlands of flowers, and bear branches of blossom in their hands.*

CHORUS. Where does the Queen of the Fairies dwell ?

East of the sun and west of the moon :
Whisper her name by the wishing well,
Curtsy and dance to the tinkling tune.

Why is her garland of petals red ?
East of the sun and west of the moon :
They grew in the sunless fields of the dead ;
Curtsy and dance to the tinkling tune.

Why is she pale as the marble stone ?
East of the sun and west of the moon :
Never a sun on the sable throne ;
Curtsy and dance to the tinkling tune.

Why is her sceptre an asphodel ?
East of the sun and west of the moon :
They gave it her once in the halls of Hell ;
Curtsy and dance to the tinkling tune.

Speak the word to be said at the shrine,
 East of the sun and west of the moon :
 Call on her name that is Proserpine ;
 Curtsy and dance to the tinkling tune.

Why with the faëry folk doth she dwell ?
 East of the sun and west of the moon :
 Oh, dark for Heaven, and bright for Hell !
 Curtsy and dance to the tinkling tune.

THE PRINCE. What festival, fair maidens, do you keep ?
 What deity of forest, field, or stream,
 Receives the homage of your minstrelsy ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY. We dwell in yonder village, and our
 song
 Is one of welcome to the newborn spring.

[*The maidens walk into the temple, except LILY
 OF THE VALLEY, who remains behind.*]

LILY OF THE VALLEY. The shadows deepen ; after set of
 sun
 This place for mortal man is perilous.

THE PRINCE. What is this haunt of dark mysterious
 things ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY. The place is consecrate to Proser-
 pine ;
 From immemorial time the sanctuary
 Gleams in the shadow of the cypress trees.

THE PRINCE. Doth priest or priestess worship Proser-
 pine ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY. The temple is deserted ; never a
 priest
 Upon the altar offers sacrifice :
 See, the grass grows upon the crumbling steps ;
 The swallows build beneath the cornices,

And unmolested in the mossy porch
The lizard basks and listens to our song.

THE PRINCE. But wherefore do you sing a festal chant ?
And wherefore are you garlanded with flowers ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY. We maidens still in the mute
sanctuary

Pay homage to the goddess of the spring.
The village folk avoid the lonely place ;
They say that he who after set of sun
Lingers here, falls beneath a deadly spell.

THE PRINCE. A spell ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY. The witchery of Proserpine.

THE PRINCE. And he who is bewitched ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY. Untimely dies.

THE PRINCE. But you are not afraid ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY. Queen Proserpine

Is favourable to our minist'ring.
We are her trustful slaves, she harms us not.
We fear not even though the village tales
Of hauntings and of sorcery be true.
They say that flames, lit by no mortal hand,
Are seen here in the first warm nights of spring ;
And that the dead in legions numberless
March to the temple through autumnal mists ;
The tales they tell are many, many, many,
Of visions, and of elfin voices heard.
Lately new rumours to the village came
Of how the ancient gods had been dethroned,
And wandered homeless in the haunts of men.
Of how the elves of meadow and of wood
Begged Proserpine to come and be their Queen.
Some say in this green cirque of cypresses,
Before the temple on Midsummer Night,
The faëry people worship Proserpine ;

That mortals who behold this mystery
Must die within the year. And Rosalind,
One of the suppliants, saw the shadowy dance ;
The elves like fireflies twinkled in the grass,
And Proserpine walked down the temple steps.

ROSEMARY *enters from the temple. She remains on
the steps and sings :*

*I came with the swallow and with the swallow I go,
Nevermore shall I see you, friend ;
Softly over whatever was here the waters flow,
The evening has come and the end.*

*The hemlock flute in the spring and the grasshopper's song
For ever shall sound in your dream ;
My dream is dark, my dream is silent, my dream is long,
By the reeds of the sable stream.*

THE PRINCE. Who is this maiden singing a strange tune ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY. We call her Rosemary. A maiden
strange

And wistful even as her sad, slow song.
She came with the wild tulips in the spring ;
We know not whence—she never told her story.
She loves the temple ; every day she brings
Bright garlands and a sacrifice of flowers.
She sleeps within the temple's dreadful courts,
Unterrified, and heedless of the dark.
We love her ; for her ways are soft and gentle,
Even as the flute-like sadness of her song,
And the great liquid deeps of her dark eyes.
She is the priestess of the sanctuary,
And there's a something sacred clings to her,
A secret majesty, a royal fervour.

The villagers with mingled fear and love
 Regard her, though some say she is a witch,
 Others that she was born in faëryland.
 Yet they are glad she offers sacrifice,
 Deeming it brings good fortune to the place.

[ROSEMARY comes down the steps.

LILY OF THE VALLEY (*to the PRINCE*). I leave you. Yet
 beware ; for twilight falls.

[*She goes up the temple steps.*

ROSEMARY. Are you a suppliant ?

THE PRINCE. No, by chance I found
 The temple. I am for a neighbouring place :
 The sea-girt city of King Pharamond.

ROSEMARY. His daughter is the fairest in the land.

THE PRINCE. So it is said.

ROSEMARY. Beyond all mortal beauty.
 She is the first-born rose of summer-tide,
 With heart of fire, and petals of pale dawn ;
 He who beholds her loves her until death.
 Ah ! bright the lot of mortals born to love !

THE PRINCE. Is not your lot to love ?

ROSEMARY. My lot is dark ;
 Alien to mortal joy my destiny.

THE PRINCE. May you not love ?

ROSEMARY. Unearthly is my fate.
 I serve a jealous goddess.

THE PRINCE. Mortals say
 The gods have been dethroned and cast from Heaven.

ROSEMARY. Immortal are the gods ; though cast from
 Heaven,
 They still shall find on earth a dwelling-place.
 Albeit men forsake the broken altars,
 And seek strange gods and raise new images,
 Yet shall the ancient gods endure, nor pass.

So long as men shall live and men shall die
So long in majesty shall Proserpine
Await their shades beyond the Stygian stream.

THE PRINCE. Though all mankind should follow the new
gods,

I still shall kneel and worship Proserpine !

ROSEMARY. Why do you kneel and worship Proserpine ?

THE PRINCE. What other gods have gifts to give like hers ?
Their gifts are crowns of laurel, myrtle crowns.
I do not need these things ; I yearn and seek.

But Proserpine bestows the great reprieve—
The sleep that hath no ending and no dream.

ROSEMARY. The sleep is endless ; endless too the dream.

THE PRINCE. Who knows what lies beyond the gates of
Death ?

ROSEMARY. The pale dominions of Queen Proserpine ;
The waters of white Lethe, where the soul
Washes away remembrance of this earth ;
The endless dream in measureless dim fields,
A life of shadows and a silent world.

THE PRINCE. My soul is drawn towards that silent world,
And if I could escape the dream of life
I would yield gladly to the dream of death.

ROSEMARY. There is no spring-tide in the dream of
death.

THE PRINCE. The dream of life is sultry, brief, and
loud.

ROSEMARY. There are no voices in the dream of death.

THE PRINCE. Life is a garment sewn into the flesh,
Dusty and hot it weighs the body down.

ROSEMARY. The dream of death is spacious, cool, and dark.

THE PRINCE. The dream of life is full of sorry sights,
And shot with grief and many-coloured pain.

ROSEMARY. There is no sorrow in the dream of death ;

There is no mirth, no laughter, and no song.

THE PRINCE. How do you know the secrets of the tomb ?

ROSEMARY. I am the votaress of Proserpine ;
She favours me, she visits me in dreams.
But lieth life, then, heavily on you ?

THE PRINCE. I know not ; I am haunted by a voice
That comes I know not whence, a silvery voice
That steals towards me over the high hills,
And speaks of spacious, cool immensities,
And forests dense, and endless aisles of night,
And glassy reaches of a sunless river
Dim and more broad than any earthly sea ;
Of harbours dark, where many silent ships
At anchor ride, and stir not in the night.
A land beyond the sunset and the clouds,
East of the sun and westward of the moon.

ROSEMARY. East of the sun and westward of the moon
Dwells Proserpine, the sovran of the dusk.

THE PRINCE. The twilight deepens. See, how tall and
strange
The columns gleam against the purple sky.

ROSEMARY. And presently the moon with her few rays
Will touch their ghostly stature.

THE PRINCE. Verily
This is a fitting haunt for Proserpine.
When in the dawn I galloped on the hills,
My heart was light with mirth. The setting sun,
The cypresses, the temple, and the song
Have charmed away the mirth of me, and yet—
And yet the shadow which they bring to me
Is lined with magic, like a wandering tune
Heard in the night, that fills the captive soul
With melancholy which is more than joy.

Enter THE PRINCE'S SQUIRE.

THE SQUIRE. The night comes on apace.

THE PRINCE. We must be stirring.

Farewell, fair priestess ; when you offer praise
And prayer to Proserpine, remember me,
A stranger, who within these haunted precincts
Lingered no longer than a twilight hour,
And forthwith rode away into the night
To come again no more. Farewell.

ROSEMARY. Farewell.

[THE PRINCE *and* THE SQUIRE *walk up to the top of the slope on the right. As they go, ROSEMARY sings :*

*I came with the swallow, and with the swallow I go,
Nevermore shall I see you, friend ;
Softly over whatever was here the waters flow,
The evening has come and the end.*

[THE PRINCE *and* THE SQUIRE *disappear behind the hill. From the temple a Chorus of voices is heard singing :*

The moon has risen in the night of spring,
The sea is marble-smooth, and dark as wine ;
Oh ! hoist on thy dark ship a silver wing,
Come to the slumbering earth, Queen Proserpine.

Bring the swift fireflies, bring the nightingale,
And on the furrowed hills of corn and vine
Scatter red poppies ; and wild roses frail,
Upon the slumbering earth, Queen Proserpine.

Come ! Leave the woods and valleys of the night ;
 The world is breathless with a hope divine.
 A million swallows from the south take flight,
 Come, Queen of spring and swallows, Proserpine.

Beneath thy footsteps, like the milky way,
 The little twinkling asphodels shall shine ;
 With flutes of June and cymbals of glad May,
 Come, wake the slumbering earth, Queen Proserpine.

*[The moon rises and lights up the figure of ROSE-
 MARY, which all at once becomes spectral and
 majestic. A silver halo shines round her head,
 and a crown of red flowers is seen in her hair.]*

SCENE II

The Palace of KING PHARAMOND.

*A large and spacious hall in the palace, looking on to the street.
 The architecture of the hall is Byzantine ; the walls are a
 dusky gold. Round the room there is a gallery supported by
 short columns of coloured marble. In the centre there is a great
 gateway wide open on to the street. Outside a variegated
 crowd is seen, waiting for the marriage ceremony ; they are
 kept back by halberdiers in parti-coloured dress. It is a bright
 summer day.*

*On the right there is a raised platform where, under a golden dais,
 two large thrones are placed.*

KING PHARAMOND. Now let the heralds sound a triple blast;
 Let bearers of the fluttering oriflammes
 Form into rank. Let maidens strew the way
 With myrtle boughs, with lilies white and red.

THE PRINCESS. Last night a sibyl from the mountains came,
 And prayed I would delay the marriage rite ;
 Ill-starred, she said, was this, the chosen day,

And marked with evil for the Prince and me.
Let all be done to-morrow, for I dreamed
A dream that bodes ill chance and grim event.

THE KING. Put these sick fancies from thy fearful mind.

THE PRINCESS. My lord, I know disaster lies in ambush.

[THE PRINCE enters R., followed by a train of courtiers and ladies. He kneels on one knee to THE KING.

THE KING. The people wait. Let the procession form.

[THE PRINCE rises. THE KING leads THE PRINCESS to the throne and they both seat themselves. THE PRINCE stands on the right of the throne. The heralds and the bearers of the oriflammes, followed by men-at-arms, form themselves into ranks. The heralds blow a blast on their trumpets. The bells of the Cathedral are heard ringing.

A COURTIER. Pale is the Prince.

ANOTHER COURTIER. More pale is his betrothed.
Look, clouded are her eyes, and large with fear.

FIRST COURTIER. Astrologers foretold disastrous happenings ;
They read sad presage in the sky last night.

SECOND COURTIER. A wizard said the marriage should not be.

[From the street come sounds of music. A high, wailing chant is heard to the accompaniment of pipes and flutes. A procession of youths and maidens dressed in white draperies and bearing lighted tapers moves up the street. They carry a bier on which lies the body of a young maiden covered with lilies of the valley ; and they halt in front of the open door of the palace.

FIRST COURTIER. A funeral bars the way to the marriage feast.

SECOND COURTIER. A dismal omen for a day of joy.

[Outside the maidens are heard singing :

CHORUS. Drop lilies of the valley on her bier,
For Rosalind is dead, fair Rosalind ;
Fair as the first white windflower in the wind,
And frail as the first windflower of the year.

Her smile was like the foam before a wave,
Like water lit by stars her slow grey eyes ;
Her sisters were the dancing dragon-flies,
And now the wingèd moths shall haunt her grave.

There is no stone shall mark her grassy tomb,
But once a year, when dies the early bloom,
The cherry tree shall mourn for her, and shed
Frail tears, and softly shall the petals lie,
And softly fall, and falling seem to sigh :
“ Fair Rosalind, frail Rosalind, is dead.”

[The maidens form a circle round the bier and drop flowers on it.

She has gone down into the sunless day,
There where the beckoning spring-time never comes ;
To scentless fields, where the bee never hums,
To silent woods and skies for ever grey.

Ah ! weep, for she was young and she was fair ;
She was athirst for sunshine and for mirth,
For the glad sights and sounds of the sweet earth,
And now she wanders cold in the pale air.

Have pity on the shade of Rosalind,
She stretches out her hands in vain regret,
For in thy kingdom there is no west wind,
No wheat, nor any roses, and no vine ;
She loved these things ; grant that she may forget,
And drown her dreams in sleep, calm Proserpine.

[The mourners raise the bier and form into procession once more. A single voice is heard singing :

*I came with the swallow and with the swallow I go,
Nevermore shall I see you, friend ;
Softly over whatever was here the waters flow,
The evening has come and the end.*

*The hemlock flute in the spring and the grasshopper's song,
For ever will sound in your dream ;
My dream is dark, my dream is silent, my dream is long,
By the reeds of the sable stream.*

[THE PRINCE starts, and, like a man in a dream, he walks to the gateway opening on the street and walks out and mingles with the mourners ; the funeral chant continues, and THE PRINCE disappears. THE PRINCESS turns pale, THE KING and the courtiers stare at THE PRINCE as he goes in silent amazement. A cloud seems to come over the sun, and the whole room becomes nearly dark. The procession passes the window, and in the distance the funeral chant and the high piping of flutes are heard dying away.

ACT II

The cypress grove by the temple, as in Act I.

It is summer. The CHORUS OF MAIDENS enters, singing as at the end of the last scene, followed by LILY OF THE VALLEY and THE PRINCE.

CHORUS. When Rosalind across the dark stream sped,
The shades that wait beside the Stygian stream
Wondered, for never came so fair a ghost ;
They thought the moon had risen in their dream ;
Then softly bowing down, the shadowy host
Sighed : “ Rosalind, fair Rosalind, is dead.”

Thy slumber is unvisited by dreams ;
Thou hast forgotten the broad hours of noon,
The sunrise and the dusk, the rising moon,
The murmur of the fields, the tinkling streams.

The whistling of the men that mow and reap,
The winepress and the scent of mellow fruit,
The horn upon the hills, the answering flute,
Sweeten no more the softness of thy sleep.

Thou wanderest now amongst the drowsy flowers,
Tall twinkling asphodels and poppies red ;
On Proserpine's pomegranate thou hast fed.

Thou yearnest now no more for days and hours,
For the forbidden spring-time and the showers ;—
Thou art contented now amongst the dead.

[The Maidens and LILY OF THE VALLEY walk into the temple. THE PRINCE remains outside. He gazes at the temple as though dazed.]

THE PRINCE. Was it a dream, or have I just awaked
From life's brief dream? Or am I dead indeed?

[A loud noise of laughter and talk is heard. A SOLDIER, A MERCHANT, A JUGGLER, A SHEPHERD, A MONK, and an OLD MAN enter. They seat themselves on the grass in front of the temple. THE PRINCE stands aside and looks on.]

THE MERCHANT. This is the place to spend a slumberous
noon,
Shady and cool.

THE OLD MAN. And more than cool, too cold.

THE MERCHANT. Drink of this flagon. It is filled with
wine
Potent enough to wake the sleeping dead.

THE JUGGLER. The dead receive their bellyful of fire.

THE MERCHANT. The damned.

THE JUGGLER. The dead, the damned, it is the same.

THE SOLDIER. Give me the flagon. Wine is for the living.
[He takes a pull at the flask.]

A fiery wine.

THE MERCHANT. A wine for gods and kings!
To-night there will be need of fiery wine
At the King's table for the funeral feast. *[He laughs.]*
They say she wept a bucketful of tears.

THE JUGGLER. The tears of a Princess are short-lived
tears.

THE MERCHANT. She will not quickly find a wealthier
Prince.

THE PRINCE. Your pardon, sirs, I am from foreign lands;
Was Pharamond's fair daughter wed to-day?

THE JUGGLER. The festival had scarce begun at noon ;
When lo ! the bridegroom fled.

THE PRINCE. Whither and why ?

THE JUGGLER. He fled into the crowd ;
He vanished ; wherefore, whither, no man knows.

THE SHEPHERD. They say he loved her not.

THE MERCHANT. A Prince's love !
Princes are wedded to maintain their lineage ;
To fortify the state by regal ties,
And to bring gold to empty treasuries.

THE SHEPHERD. Princes are made of flesh like mortal men.

THE JUGGLER. Flesh, rotten flesh ! the devil's savoury
food.

THE PRINCE. Yet far and wide the minstrels sing the
praise
Of the King's daughter.

THE JUGGLER. Yes, the lass is fair ;
Too fair, too swiftly fair ; the bloom will vanish
As soon as she has grown to womanhood,
And leave her parched and dry. Perchance the Prince
Guessed at the truth and wisely went away.

THE SHEPHERD. Nay, beauty such as hers can never die.

THE JUGGLER. Hark at him ! Beauty lasts a fitful hour.
Queen Guinevere, for whom Sir Lancelot
Loved and fought hard, came to that nunnery
Crippled and bowed with ague and chill pains.
And when the knights rode past the convent gate,
And some one cried : " The nun with snow-white hair,
Who totters feebly to the cloister wall,
Is Guinevere," they laughed his words to scorn.
Iseult of Cornwall once was beautiful,
She loved her Tristram well. Alack ! he found
In Brittany, betimes, a fresher face—
Iseult the Lily-handed ; he forgot

His former love, although she sailed to him,
 Across th' insensate sea, when he lay sick ;—
 And, dying, from her face he turned away,
 Nor recognised the features of his friend.

THE SHEPHERD. And yet there is a wondrous thing called
 Love ;

A mystery, a blessed miracle,
 A sacrament, most holy, most divine.

THE JUGGLER. Fools call it love ; and the priest calls it
 sin.

The Devil calls it lust. The Devil knows.
 What made the sceptre of Imperial Rome
 Fall from the grasp of brave Mark Antony ?
 Because a wasp-like gipsy stung his flesh,
 And in his veins a riotous venom ran
 Which maddened him and left him languorous.
 A pretty scene ! The high-souled warrior
 Helpless and crazy as a rudderless ship,
 Pinned to a petticoat, while empires crashed.
 Regardless of his height and his renown,
 And heedless of the fate of ruining worlds,
 Languidly drifting to ignoble doom,
 To satisfy a royal harlot's lust.

And Helen—what was the rare miracle
 Which made fair Helen fly her husband's home,
 And mowed, like grass, the chivalry of Greece ?
 What was the sacrament, the mystery,
 That bade false Paris seek a paramour ?

He sings :

*Fair Helen wearied of her lord,
 And Paris pleased her eye ;
 He looked at her ; she blushed and said :
 " Together let us fly."*

*With Paris Helen ran from home,
She crossed the purple main ;
Ten thousand galleys followed her,
To bring her home again.*

*Ten years the bravest sons of Greece
Fought for a woman's shame—
A faithless wife's desire that flared
And died like fickle flame.*

*They fought beneath the walls of Troy,
They fought for ten years long ;
The father died, the child at home
Cursed Helen in his song.*

*They fought beneath the walls of Troy,
They fought for ten long years.
And husbands died, and wives at home
Cursed Helen in their tears.*

*They took by stealth the walls of Troy,
They burnt them to the ground ;
They buried Helen's lover deep .
Under a heavy mound.*

*They brought false Helen home again,
And she grew old and grey ;
She mourned in vain her perished charms
Until her dying day.*

*She met her lover in the shades,
He turned his face aside ;
" I am that Helen whom you loved,
Helen of Troy," she cried.*

*"Helen of Troy was young and fair,
I know you not," he said ;
The shivering ghost of Helen moaned,
And bowed her royal head.*

*The Devil laughed and cracked his whip
And said : "As I've heard tell,
On earth ye twain were lovers once :
Be lovers here in Hell.*

*For nothing now shall part ye twain,
And in the icy place
Paris shall have no other sight
Than Helen's wrinkled face."*

THE SOLDIER. I care not for your Helens and Iseults,
In yonder village there are red-lipped lasses,
Fresh as ripe cherries on the cherry tree,
To meet the warrior who returns from war.

THE JUGGLER. Sir Warrior, your philosophy is wise.
A soldier sees in every tavern drab
A Hebe, and the nectar of her lips
Is sweet and leaves no bitterness behind.
The soldier's love is very free from care ;
He shares the sacrament of bird and beast,
And greatly he enjoys the miracle !

THE SOLDIER. A fig for miracles ! I love a lass,
I love a fight ;—a fig for foolish dreams !

THE MERCHANT. The greater fools are you who seek the
wars,
Endure the hardships of the rough campaign,
And sweat and labour, buffeted and starved,
And win but festering wounds and grisly scars
For all reward, or else untimely die,

So that an idle king may loll at ease
And dwell secure in rooted indolence.
One thing alone is worth the toil of search—
Gold, shining gold, red gold, omnipotent gold ;
For gold brings lovely lasses, foaming wine,
Gilt palaces and gems, and brazen galleys,
Glory and honour and dominion,
Ease, freedom, friends, and every mortal joy.

THE SOLDIER. We soldiers fight for glory, not for gold.
We fight because we love the clash of steel,
The shock, the charge, the bristling line of battle !
Not all the wealth of Asia buys these things.

THE MERCHANT. Such things are sought and won by
fools alone.

THE SHEPHERD. But there is something greater than
renown,
Than gold, than glory and dominion :
Love, mortal love ; to him who loves, the world
Is faëryland and then is Paradise.

THE MONK. Shepherd, your words are true, for power and
glory
Are like the changing mist ; or flakes of snow
That melt and vanish when they touch this earth.

THE JUGGLER. Yet nothing drags man's soul to certain
doom
So swiftly as this love of which you tell.

THE MONK. I preach not earthly love, but love divine ;
For he who loses all upon this earth,
And tramples on his dreams of power and glory,
And stifles longing, lust and all desires,
He finds eternal love, the love of God.
Love infinite that wrappeth up the whole.

THE SHEPHERD. But, holy man, the love divine you preach
Shields and enfolds a mortal's earthly love.

THE MONK. My child, the love of mortals is a snare,
A gilded picture painted by the Devil,
To lure the soul to everlasting fire.
For lovers in the flesh are doomed and damned
To outer darkness and unending flames.

THE JUGGLER. And faithless lovers in the fires of Hell
Shall kindle one another's dead desire.

THE SOLDIER. Our business is to live, as men should live.
When life is ended, God shall deal with us.

THE JUGGLER. You put away the thought of death ; you
shun it.
But there is none who hears unterrified
His footfall and the hissing of his scythe.

THE OLD MAN. There is a tournament where Death
himself
Answers the challenge of a mortal knight,
And meets him in the lists.

THE JUGGLER. Death wins the fight.

THE OLD MAN. He who would win needs more than
fearlessness.
He must renounce all longing for the day,
Desire the life in death ; thus only he
Who vanquishes and kills his love of life
And longs for Death and for the life in death,
Shall vanquish Death.

THE JUGGLER. To vanquish Death he dies.
Where is the conquest, what the victory ?

THE OLD MAN. He who shall vanquish Death shall live
and love
In death, and Death shall have no hold on him.

THE JUGGLER. 'Tis better to be vanquished than to win ;
What is the profit for a gibbering ghost,
For rattling bones, to live and love in Hell ?

THE OLD MAN. I fought myself in that grim tournament.

I loved ; I thought my love was strong as Death ;
But when the trumpets sounded in the lists,
And bony Death came rattling on his steed,
I turned towards the sunny world, and fear,
Fear crept into the corners of my heart ;
I durst not ride into the dreadful lists,
I durst not meet the foe—I was afraid.

THE SOLDIER. You were no coward to refuse to fight :
The bravest man fears Death.

THE OLD MAN. I challenged him,
I feared to fight ; I paid the penalty.
Bitter and long has been the punishment ;
I wander restless through the changing world,
Aching and weary, and I find no rest,
For Death has shut his gates upon my soul.

THE PRINCE. But had you fought and failed ?

THE OLD MAN. I should have died
And found forgetfulness.

THE PRINCE. And had you vanquished ?

THE OLD MAN. I still should forgetful live in Death.

THE JUGGLER. A living dog is better than a ghost.

THE MONK. Your talk is blind with error and with sin ;
Repent, and you shall find eternal rest
In Heaven, and everlasting happiness.

THE MERCHANT. Both Heaven and Hell are here upon
the earth.

THE JUGGLER. Wait till you hear the waving of Death's
wings,
The roaring of the furnaces of Hell.

THE SOLDIER. The sun is high in the heavens, so fare you
well ;
I'm for the city, I am for the wars.
To fight the Emperor of the Orient ;
So fare you well. Good luck to you, my friends.

THE MERCHANT. My argosies await me in the port,
 Stout bales of precious stuff, pearls from Ceylon,
 Nuggets of metal, tusks of ivory,
 And amber and Phœnician spikenard.

THE MONK. And I am for the windy pinnacles ;
 I go to intercede for your sick souls,
 To mortify my flesh, to watch and pray.

THE OLD MAN. I am once more for, oh, the endless road !

THE JUGGLER. I go to juggle—with the souls of men.

[THE MERCHANT, THE JUGGLER, THE OLD MAN,
and THE MONK *go down behind the hill.*
 THE SHEPHERD *and* THE PRINCE *remain.*
 THE PRINCE *withdraws into the cypresses by*
the temple, where he is half concealed.

THE SHEPHERD *sings :*

*The mower at his scythe
 Is whistling in the hay ;
 The world is fair and blithe,
 O heart, keep holiday !*

*O gaudy month of June,
 O vocal noontide-hours,
 What care I for thy tune ?
 What care I for thy flowers ?*

*No more I heed the song
 Of thrush and calling dove,
 For I hear all day long
 The cooing note of love.*

*Upon her casement ledge,
 To-day I saw the rose,
 I flung across the hedge,
 Into her orchard close.*

*" Thy true love thinks of thee,
She thinks of thee to-day,"
So spake the rose to me,
O heart, keep holiday !*

Enter HEARTSEASE.

THE SHEPHERD. At last, O fairest ! I have waited long.

HEARTSEASE. I love you ; tell me that you love me true.

THE SHEPHERD. I love you true, dear heart ! I love you true.

HEARTSEASE. If I should die ?

THE SHEPHERD. Then I should straightway die.

HEARTSEASE. Or if some black misfortune should befall—
If I grew old and ugly in a night ?

THE SHEPHERD. My love would kiss away your tears ; to
me

You will be you, to-morrow and to-day,
And always, whatsoever fate may bring,
To me for ever you are beautiful.

HEARTSEASE. Last night I dreamed of you, and every
night

I dream of you, and in my last night's dream
We sailed across the ocean in a boat,
We sailed across the sea to faëryland.

THE SHEPHERD. And there we built a castle on a hill.

HEARTSEASE. And round the castle there were orchards
green.

THE SHEPHERD. Where silver apples glimmer through the
dusk.

HEARTSEASE. And in the castle there is a tall throne
Whence we look down upon the coloured world.

THE SHEPHERD. A hundred nightingales shall sing to us,
Sing us to sleep beneath the apple trees.

HEARTSEASE. A thousand larks shall wake us in the morn.

THE SHEPHERD. The elves shall come and crown you with
soft dew,
For you shall be their Queen.

HEARTSEASE. And you their King.

THE SHEPHERD. And then, when we grow tired of faëry-
land,

We shall come back and build a little hut
In Sicily, amidst the corn and vines.

HEARTSEASE. Or nestling on the cliff by the blue sea.

THE SHEPHERD. And we shall live together till we die.

HEARTSEASE. Haply you'll find a fairer lass than me ;
Haply you will forsake me and forget.

THE SHEPHERD. There is no woman beautiful as you
In the wide world, oh dear, in all the world !

HEARTSEASE. And there is none so glorious as my love.
I love you then, my joy, my good delight !

[From the temple a sound of singing is heard.]

HEARTSEASE. Come, let us go ; I hear the sound of voices.
[They go up into the hills.]

THE PRINCE. First love of mortal men ! Great ecstasy,
And seal of human things ! I dreamt a dream—
Oh ! I shall put away my sullen thought,
I shall go back into the noisy world
And find soft eyes to watch me, and sweet lips
To smile, embracing arms and a warm heart ;
I shall forget my melancholy dream.

*[THE MAIDENS come out of the temple and walk
down behind the hill out of sight, except ROSE-
MARY, who walks down the temple steps.]*

ROSEMARY. Why do you linger in this place of shadow ?
Go to the world and find felicity.

THE PRINCE. Why do you bid me go ?

ROSEMARY. Because I love you.
I love you, and I fear to do you harm.

THE PRINCE. At last the veil is lifted from my eyes ;
My deep and burning thirst is quenched at last,
And stilled the fiery restlessness within
That all my life has sore tormented me.
I love you. I have loved you all my life ;
This face has haunted me in countless shapes,
In every sight of earth and sea and sky ;
This voice has haunted me in every sound.
Now all is clear.

ROSEMARY. Then if you love me, go.

THE PRINCE. I will not go. My heart's desire is here.
Soft is the shipwreck in this sea of dream.

ROSEMARY. My love is overshadowed by black wings.

THE PRINCE. My love is strong enough to conquer Death.

ROSEMARY. Leave me and seek the tournament of Life.

THE PRINCE. I love you for your sorrowful soft eyes,
I love you for your pale unaltered face,
I love you for your wide and dusky hair,
I love you for your voice which is the world's.

ROSEMARY. I love you, friend, I who have never loved !

THE PRINCE. Long have I dreamed of you throughout the
world.

Far have I wandered, seeking for this face ;
Ah ! I have snatched the mask from many a face,
Yearning to find the twilight-laden eyes
That haunted me and never let me rest ;
Now I have found my dream ; my quest is done.

ROSEMARY. O heart's desire, I too have sought for you,
I too have sought and found a beckoning dream ;
I must no sooner find than lose my dream.
Alas ! that I should lose the long-sought prize !
Oh, would this hour could last, that you and I
Might wander in deep woods for evermore,
Lost in the thickets of a leafy gloom !

For you are like the spirit of the woods,
The child of the cool forest and its ways.

THE PRINCE. And you are like the music of the trees,
The notes of calling flute and mellow horn,
That echo in the woodland far away.

ROSEMARY. Oh, precious vision ! oh, fugitive frail dream !
Oh, would that you could last ! Oh, would that we
Might hoist your wings for sails, and say farewell
For ever to the harbours of this world !

THE PRINCE. So shall it be. The vision shall come true.
We shall sail down the estuaries of time,
And reach the ocean of eternity,
East of the sun, and westward of the moon.

ROSEMARY. No, no, the dream must cease, and you must
go.

Dark is my destiny. Ah, question not ;
As soon as summer dies, I disappear,
And to my home you cannot follow me,
For I am plighted to one man alone.

THE PRINCE. Who is the man ? Reveal this destiny.
I cannot suffer greater hurt than death.
I cannot leave you now, unless I die.

ROSEMARY. There is one mortal man whom I may love.
That man must challenge Death and fight with him ;
That man must vanquish Death, and if he fails
He dies, he passes to oblivion ;
He wanders, lost to me for evermore.
And many Knights have fought for me and fallen.
Thus was I loath to tell the mystery,
Lest, like the others, you should fight and fall.

THE PRINCE. But I shall challenge Death and vanquish
him.

[ROSEMARY looks at THE PRINCE and bows her head.
In the distance the shepherd's pipe is heard.

ROSEMARY. The careless shepherd plays upon his reed,
The reapers rest beside the sunburnt corn,
The bee about the lily softly hums,
The maidens dip the pitcher in the well,
Through leafy ways the groaning wagons creak,
Drawn by the slow white oxen, and the swain
Upon his fragrant load lies fast asleep.
The heat is twinkling o'er the yellow fields,
A myriad grasshoppers, the croaking frogs
Make music, while the mailed dragon-flies
Poise o'er the glassy stream ; the world is bright,
The world is joyous, and the world is fair,
And pleasant are the noises of the noon.

THE PRINCE. I crave the silence of a sunless world.

ROSEMARY. Sweet is the fragrance of the wild white rose,
The honeysuckle and the new-mown hay.

THE PRINCE. I crave the scentless slumber-laden flowers.

ROSEMARY. Soft are the hollow wood-notes of the dove,
And low the flight of swallows in the dusk.

THE PRINCE. I crave the woods unvexed by noise of wings.

ROSEMARY. Glad is the sight of scarlet-flaunted fields,
The waving wheat, the dancing cornflowers,
The summer lightning and the falling stars,
The flickering of the fireflies in the wheat,
The hot green spaces of midsummer darkness.
Can you forgo for ever these fair sights ?

THE PRINCE. The sights I need are mirrored in your eyes.

ROSEMARY. The sighing of the wind, the whispering sea,
The noise and laughter of the busy street,
The song of lovers and the shepherd's reed.
Can you forgo for ever these sweet sounds ?

THE PRINCE. The sounds I need are echoed in your speech ;
The sights and sounds of life shall pass away,
And in the sunless place, for you and me

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ACT III

The temple, as in Act I.

It is autumn. The hills are parched by the heat. The distant trees are red, brown, and gold. The ground is strewn with fallen leaves. It is late in the afternoon. The sun is low in the heavens. LILY OF THE VALLEY and THE MAIDENS are discovered, moaning on the steps of the temple.

*Enter THE MERCHANT, THE OLD MAN, THE JUGGLER,
THE SHEPHERD, and THE SOLDIER.*

THE SHEPHERD. What evil fortune has befallen you,
That you lament together, maidens, so ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY. Our loved companion, Rosemary,
has fled.

She, whom they named the Priestess ; she most fair.
Most gentle and most sad. Last night together
We brought the dying summer's rusty spoil
Unto the temple, and we left her here
And tarried for her underneath the hill.
For in the temple she'd make melody
Until the set of sun. When twilight fell,
Lo ! Rosemary had vanished, vanished too
The flowers upon the altar. Far and near
We sought and called in vain for Rosemary ;
Again to-day we searched the countryside,
In vain, for Rosemary has left no trace.

THE SHEPHERD. Last night when sunset burned beyond
the trees,

I met a hooded maiden bearing branches ;
She wore a sable robe, but her pale brow
Was garlanded with poppies.

LILY OF THE VALLEY. Rosemary
Was clad like us in garb of festal colour.

THE SHEPHERD. Haply she wanders on the windy hills.

THE MERCHANT. In vain you seek her on the windy hills ;
Go to the glittering city ; there it is
That comely maidens find their heart's desire.

LILY OF THE VALLEY. This temple was the home of
Rosemary—
And in this temple was her heart's desire.

THE JUGGLER. Your search is vain. She will return no
more.

THE SOLDIER. Haply she went to see the tournament.

LILY OF THE VALLEY. What tournament ?

THE SOLDIER. Within the sea-girt city,
The far-famed tournament of Life and Death
Was fought to-day before King Pharamond.

THE OLD MAN. And to-day's tournament throughout the
world
Shall be renowned until the end of time.

For Death was vanquished by Mortality.

THE SOLDIER. We soldiers oft need all our bravery
To fight the living ; this man fought with Death.

LILY OF THE VALLEY. Who vanquished Death ?

THE OLD MAN. An unknown Knight.

THE MERCHANT. Some say
It was the lost betrothed of the Princess,
Who fought to win forgiveness and new love.

THE OLD MAN. That cannot be, for when black-armoured
Death
Fell rattling from his steed, a skeleton,
When that loud crash of thunder filled the air,

When the Knight took the coal-black plumes of Death
And, marching to the maiden in her place,
Received of her the crown of victory,
With eyes that did not look he grasped the laurel,
And left the lists. He was so heedless, he ;—
Nor set the leaves upon his conquering brow,
Nor cast one glance upon the peerless face.

THE SHEPHERD. Haply he loved another, now as then,
I gazed on the Princess, and when the Knight
Took with averted eyes the crown of leaves,
A deadly pallor crept across her cheek,
She fell in helpless swoon.

THE JUGGLER. O foolish boy !
It was the presence of the kingly fear,
The icy wind which blows from Death's broad stream,
That overcame her. And it was the sight
Of Death arrayed in armour forged in Hell,
Prancing upon a terrible war-horse, shod
In workshops of the damned, that scared her thus.

THE OLD MAN. Perchance. It did not scare the fearless
Knight.

THE SHEPHERD. She swooned for joy because the Knight
had won,
She swooned for sorrow that he went away.

THE JUGGLER. She swooned for fear of the armed skeleton ;
To feel the darkness of the outer place
Where the damned souls wander in agony.

THE SHEPHERD. There is a quiet place beyond the grave
Where happy souls shall taste felicity.

THE MERCHANT. Within the grave is darkness and the dust,
And never-ending sleep. The tales of Hell
And Paradise are made to frighten babes.

THE JUGGLER. There is a place of bartering and no speech.
There you shall traffic with dim merchandise.

For ever shall you pile a hoard that fades,
For ever tell the tale of phantom gold,
And filled for ever with unquenched desire
And despair permanent, you, in that place,
Shall curse the dream that mocks but cannot cease.
There is a place where you, young sick o' love,
Shall pipe to hags and upon fiery hills.
There is a place where you, tall soldier-thing,
Shall charge the unsubstantial hosts of night
For ever, and for ever fail to charge,
And know defeat in battles never joined,
And hear such foemen as you shall not see.

THE SOLDIER. I have fought fairly on this earth ; the gods
Shall fairly deal with me ; unterrified,
At least, the Knight who conquered Death himself
Shall dwell in Death's abode.

THE JUGGLER. O simple soldier,
His of all fates the most unhappy fate !
For he shall die, and that right speedily ;
Upon this world his fortune was despair,
Despair shall be his lot beyond the grave.

THE OLD MAN. The man who conquers Death, albeit
he die,
Is freed for ever from all restlessness.

THE SHEPHERD. The sun is sinking, and the mist of night
Is full of shapes immortal. It is cold.

LILY OF THE VALLEY. Methought I heard the voice of
Rosemary.

THE JUGGLER. Far beyond earthly hail is Rosemary !

LILY OF THE VALLEY. Begone, false juggler ! hateful is
your speech,
Loathsome your laughter and the sight of you.
This is a holy place. The shadows fall ;
It is not good for mortals to be here ;

You will offend immortal Proserpine.

Begone, I pray you. Leave me to my grief.

THE SOLDIER. She speaketh true. Come, sirs, let us be stirring.

Come, leave her to her grief.

THE JUGGLER. Your Rosemary

Has haply met a witch's fiery doom.

THE SHEPHERD (*to LILY OF THE VALLEY*). May the gods bless you and requite your prayer.

[*They all go except LILY OF THE VALLEY, who walks up to the temple.*]

LILY OF THE VALLEY. I hear the faëry voices in the wind ;
The evening deepens, the forbidden hour

Is nigh. I must not desecrate the place.

O Rosemary, come back to me once more ;

O Proserpine, give back our Rosemary !

[*She goes out. PROSERPINE walks from the cypresses on to the steps in her true shape, in all her glory and majesty. She is clothed in dark draperies and wears a wreath of scarlet poppies. Below the temple steps the Ghosts of the Dead rise and bow down before her, and are heard singing :*

CHORUS OF GHOSTS. The swallow seeks the southern land again,

The trees, all save the cypress and the pine,
Are splashed and dyed with autumn's crimson stain ;

Come back unto thy dead, Queen Proserpine.

The fruit has fallen from the orchard trees,

And on the mountain-ash red berries shine ;

The ship awaits thee and the ghostly breeze :

Come back unto thy dead, Queen Proserpine.

The golden wheat was garnered long ago,
And ended is the harvest of the vine ;
Through ragged woods the winds of autumn blow ;
Come back unto thy dead, Queen Proserpine.

Forsake the sunburnt hills of Sicily,
The laughter and the song, the flowery shrine.
Hark ! in the wind the wandering spirits sigh :
Come back unto thy dead, Queen Proserpine.

[THE PRINCE *is dazed and dazzled by her appearance, and kneels before her.*

PROSERPINE. I am Queen Proserpine, whom, till
to-day,

You knew but in a mortal guise, and now
Behold in her unclouded majesty
And undiminished splendour ; to the earth
I came with the return of spring, and now
I go, with dying summer, to the dark.

THE PRINCE. Lady of Darkness, I have conquered
Death ;

Here is the helm of Death, and here the crown.

PROSERPINE. You do not wear the crown of victory,
The crown of life, which you did nobly win ;
What do you crave instead for recompense ?

THE PRINCE. To follow to your everlasting home,
To dwell for ever in the dream of you.
This is the only recompense I crave—
Ah ! you know well what is my heart's desire.

PROSERPINE. In my pale kingdom on a pillared
throne,
I shall be far removed from you, for you
Shall dwell amid the myriads of the dead ;—
They may not even see my royal face,
And only you, of all the endless host,

Shall unforgetful gaze on Proserpine.

Will you receive that for your recompense ?

THE PRINCE. I shall behold your changeless face and dwell

For ever in the dream and sight of you,
For ever in the thought and light of you,
For ever in the shadow of your soul,
For ever in the stillness that is you,
Remembering all that was ; far off, but near,
Beyond the reach of Life and Death and Time,
And linked by chains of silent song to you.
And though the rivers and the plains of Hell
Between us lie, if I behold this face,
I shall be one with your wide majesty,
And with your mute and dark dominion one,
One with your pale, your glimmering loveliness,
One with your sorrow endless and divine,
One with the vastness of your silver dream,
One with your deeps of silence infinite,
And one with your eternal life in death.

PROSERPINE. So shall it be.

THE PRINCE. Beyond the silent stream
I shall behold you far upon your throne.

PROSERPINE. So shall it be.

THE PRINCE. I shall behold your face,
And I shall share the sorrow of your dream,
And you shall feel my infinite desire.

PROSERPINE. Yet shall we be eternally apart,
Eternally asunder and apart.

THE PRINCE. Eternally divided and apart.
And yet my soul shall, like a drop of dew,
Dwell in the inmost petals of your soul.

PROSERPINE. Eternally asunder and yet near,
Together, though eternally apart,

So shall it be, according to your choice.
For you have conquered Death, and you can choose
The fruit of darkness or the fruit of light,
The apple or the slumberous pomegranate.
So take this apple, take this pomegranate,
Await on earth the footfall of the spring,
Then, when the rapturous earth awakes from sleep
And calls the summer to make love to her,
Look round and hear the music of the spring—
Look round and heed the glory of the world,
The pastures, the fresh woods, the cloudy hills,
The murmurous cities and the smiling sea ;
If on that day you still shall crave the dark,
The silence, and the sorrow of my dream,
Taste the pomegranate ; you shall sleep to wake
Within my shadow ; but if smiling life
Be sweet to you, then taste the golden fruit,
You shall forget the dream of Proserpine,
And live contented in the world of men.
And with the spring I shall return once more,
And I shall love you with a mortal's love,
And you shall love me with a mortal's love,
With all a mortal's ecstasy of love,
With all a mortal's swift forgetfulness.
And when the summer dies, and I once more
Return to the dark realm, you shall forget ;
And, fancy-free, shall seek and find new joy.

THE PRINCE. And if I taste the other darker fruit,
Will you return with the returning spring ?

PROSERPINE. I shall be unaware of earth and spring.
I shall forget the vision of the world,
I shall have found the dream I sought on earth ;
And lost and drowned in my eternal dream,
I nevermore shall seek the earth in spring.

CHORUS OF THE DEAD. Pale Proserpine descends to her
dark home,
And bow ye dead, bow down, ye voiceless dead ;
The scentless poppy bends its heavy head,
And silent is the sluggish Stygian foam.

In the dominion of the silent air
The shivering dead are comfortless and lone,
For Proserpine upon her pillared throne
Heedless beholds perpetual despair.

Pale Proserpine is mournful even as they,
For she remembers sweeter sound and sight ;
In vain she seeks the world in the sweet spring,
Her sojourn there is darkened by Death's wing,
As here her dream within the halls of night
Is cursed by the remembrance of the day.

PROSERPINE. Farewell. I go to my dominion,
East of the sun and westward of the moon ;
But you await the coming of the spring.

[PROSERPINE *walks into the temple.*

